

**Childhood and the Second World War in the European Fiction Film**

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## **Abstract**

The classically idyllic, carefree world of childhood would appear to be diametrically opposed to the horrors of war and world-wide conflict. However, throughout film history, filmmakers have continually turned to the figure of the child as a prism through which to examine the devastation caused by war.

This thesis will investigate the representation of childhood experience of the Second World War across six fiction films: Roberto Rossellini's *Paisan* (1946) and *Germany Year Zero* (1947), René Clément's *Forbidden Games* (1952), Andrei Tarkovsky's *Ivan's Childhood* (1962), Jan Nemec's *Diamonds of the Night* (1964) and Elem Klimov's *Come and See* (1985). Spanning forty years, I will examine how these films, whilst sharing many thematic and formal concerns, are unquestionably diverse. They are products of specific socio-cultural milieux, but are also important works in the evolution of cinematic style in art cinema. The films can be aligned to various trends such as neorealism (*Paisan*, *Germany Year Zero*), Modernism (*Ivan's Childhood*, *Diamonds of the Night*) and Neo-expressionism (*Come and See*).

Structured in four parts – on witness, landscape, loss and play – I will suggest that just filmmakers utilise childhood experience – often fragmented and chaotic in terms of temporality - to reflect the chaos of war.

The first part of my study focuses on the child as witness, the child as Deleuzian seer. I draw on the writings of Gilles Deleuze as well as post-Deleuzian interventions of Tyrus Miller and Jaimey Fisher to argue that whilst Deleuze's characterization of the child figure as passive is somewhat problematic when applied to the neorealist

works, it can, however, be more rigorously applied to *Come and See*, a film in which, I suggest, the child embodies a much purer form of the Deleuzian seer.

In the second part of my study, drawing on the work of Martin Lefebvre and Sandro Bernardi amongst others, I discuss the representation of landscape and its relation to the figure of the child. The third part will examine the representation of loss as well as the symbolic quality of water and its links to the maternal with reference to psychoanalytic theory and the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore. The fourth and final part also draws on psychoanalysis in examining the role of play in the six films with particular reference to the work of D.W Winnicott and Lenore Terr.

My study seeks to contribute to the comparatively under-explored subject of the child in film through close analysis of film aesthetics including mise-en-scène, editing, and film sound.



## **Glossary of Terms**

### **Modernism**

A comprehensive term for a movement which began in the final years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and which pertains to all the creative arts. In terms of literature, modernism meant a breaking away from established rules, traditions and conventions, new ways of looking at man's position in the world. The movement also encompasses subsidiary movements such as Cubism, Surrealism, Expressionism). Some of the key modernist authors included James Joyce, Virginia Wolff, Luigi Pirandello, Franz Kafka, Marcel Proust and William Faulkner.

In terms of modernist cinema, although early works such as Buñuel's *Un chien andalou* can be classified as modernist, it is the art cinema of the late 1950s and early 1960s which is often referred to as such. Films such as Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'Avventura* (1960), Alain Resnais' *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad* (1963) or Ingmar Bergman's *The Silence* (1963) are undoubtedly modernist in their eschewing of the narrative and formal conventions of traditional Hollywood cinema.

### **Expressionism**

A cultural movement in Germany dating from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in which art was seen as a reflection of subjective reality. Distortion and exaggeration transformed the physical world into a projection of the inner self.

In the world of film, the expressionist movement lasted from 1919 (and the release of Robert Weine's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*) to 1933. Some formal traits of expressionist film include distorted and exaggerated settings, dramatic shadows,

non-realist compositions and stylised acting. Other filmmakers accosted to the movement included F.W. Murnau (*Nosferatu*, *The Last Laugh*) and Fritz Lang (*Dr. Mabuse The Gambler*, *Metropolis*).

### **Neorealism**

A cultural movement in Italy which, in film, was inaugurated by the release of Luchino Visconti's debut feature *Ossessione* (1942). The movement was a reaction against the formalism of Italian cinema of the fascist years and a response to the social conditions in Italy during and immediately after the Second World War. Apart from Visconti, the other key filmmakers in the neorealist movement were Roberto Rossellini (*Rome*, *Open City*, *Paisan*, *Germany Year Zero*), Vittorio De Sica (*Shoeshine*, *Bicycle Thieves*, *Umberto D*) and Giuseppe De Santis (*Bitter Rice*).

### **Gilles Deleuze: The Time-Image and the figure of the Seer**

According to Post-Structuralist philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1925 – 1995), the time-image governs cinema from the end of the Second World War to the present. Drawing from the work of Henri Bergson, Deleuze argues that time-images relate a change in the configuration of the world. These images do not favour narrative or encourage audience identification. It is a cinema of the 'seer' and no longer of the agent. The character becomes a kind of viewer with the situation he finds himself in outstripping his motor capacities.

## 1. Introduction

The figure of the child was a prominent one as far back as the films of the pioneers, of Lumière and Méliès. François Vallet, in *L'image de l'enfant au cinéma*, has suggested that:

‘Without doubt, cinema’s pioneers, in a way which was more or less conscious, understood that this new art should never stop drawing from the sources of childhood if it wanted to survive [...] This was the lesson given by Lumière, Méliès and their followers.’<sup>1</sup>

Luciano Cecconi views the premiere of films by Auguste and Louis Lumière on 28 December 1895 as the event with which ‘the cinema officially became part of the history of children.’<sup>2</sup> Indeed, as both Vallet and Cecconi have pointed out, children were very much an integral part of the films of the pioneers.<sup>3</sup> Whilst children as characters featured heavily in Lumière films, the fantastical *spirit*, the *jouissance* of childhood is first captured in the films of Georges Méliès, whose films were the first to mark ‘the real point of convergence between the world of childhood and the first images of the cinématographe. Thanks to his genius, the imagination, the virginal gaze, the oneiric quality synonymous with the world of childhood became an integral part of cinematic spectacle’<sup>4</sup>

All these Mélièsian qualities are undoubtedly present in the work of Jean Cocteau, another major artistic figure who privileged the world of childhood. Marjorie Keller has written of the latter’s views on childhood that:

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Les pionniers du cinéma ont compris, sans doute de manière plus ou moins consciente, que cet art nouveau ne devait jamais cesser de puiser aux sources mêmes de l’enfance s’il voulait subsister [...] Telle est la leçon de Lumière, de Méliès et de leurs héritiers.’ François Vallet, *L'image de l'enfant au cinéma*, p.19

<sup>2</sup> Cecconi, p.47

<sup>3</sup> Children featured prominently in films such as *Pêche aux poisons rouges*, *Querelle enfantine*, *Enfants au bord de la mer* and, perhaps most famously, in *Repas du bébé*.

<sup>4</sup> Vallet, p.19

‘Cocteau poses the antagonism of children to the adult world, and the knowing or unknowing rebellion of children against social forms, as the foundation for his assertion that childhood is a morally superior state of being.’<sup>5</sup>

Keller points out that Cocteau saw many correlations between the experience of film and that of childhood. For Cocteau, ‘looking itself [was] a potent activity’<sup>6</sup> and this is also why he believed that childhood is the time of life which most represented the lives of poets and artists.<sup>7</sup> Cocteau also equated the adult conception of death to the child’s conception of adulthood, given that from there ‘[...] orders emanate, [...] hidden authorities dominate [...] laws are unknown but all-encompassing.’<sup>8</sup>

The antagonism between and the irreconcilability of the worlds of the child and the adult central to the work of Cocteau is also fundamental to that of Jean Vigo whose heavily autobiographical *Zéro de conduite* (1933) is undoubtedly one of the most influential films on the experience of childhood. Vallet has observed that with his first feature, Vigo had filmed his own (psychological) wounds and that the film itself is essentially about the ‘wound’ between the worlds of the child and the adult, ‘an imbecilic barrier between two worlds which each need the dreams and tenderness of the other to survive.’<sup>9</sup> This fracture between the world of the child and that of the adult is, of course, central to the films in my corpus. The blame for this failure to communicate, to understand, is attributed by Rossellini, Clément, Tarkovsky, Nemec and Klimov firmly to the adult who is shown to abandon the child precisely at a time – of war, of conflict - when he/she most desperately yearns for adult support. But of

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<sup>5</sup> Marjorie Keller, *The Untutored Eye: Childhood in the Films of Cocteau, Cornell and Brakhage* (London: Associated University Press 1986) p. 20

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.* p.25

<sup>7</sup> Indeed, those artists who retained child-like qualities and engaged with the imagination of children in their lives and work were of great interest to Cocteau. The great achievement of Picasso, he claimed, was his ‘refusal to grow-up’.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.* p.44

<sup>9</sup> ‘[...] la frontière imbécile entre deux mondes qui ont besoin des rêves et de la tendresse de l’un et de l’autre pour survivre’ in Vallet, p.25

course, as Vallet has observed, is not ‘the territory for conquest of all wars [...] the paradise of childhood?’<sup>10</sup>

Historian Pierre Sorlin, in his essay ‘Children as war victims in post-war European cinema’, has argued that ‘in films, childhood was an invention of the 1940s’<sup>11</sup> – of wartime:

‘Previously, few films had taken kids as their protagonists and, most of the time, boys or girls were mere pretexts, useful to idealise the nuclear family and legitimate the male domination.’<sup>12</sup>

Whilst childhood and war may initially seem antinomic, Neil Sinyard has made a link between the two periods:

‘Both [are] periods of chaos and anarchy, and [see] a loosening of society’s rules. War intensifies the life around a child and might even make life seem more exciting [...] There is great dramatic value in the incongruity of the child’s relations to the events of war, because of not being old enough to perceive, understand or respect the ‘appropriate’ adult response.’<sup>13</sup>

However incongruous the child may seem in the ‘adult’ arena of warfare, both childhood and war represent extremes in the human condition. Along with Cecconi and Sinyard, Tyrus Miller, François Vallet, Pierre Sorlin, Vicky Lebeau and, most recently, Karen Lury, have also examined the correlations between childhood and war, all highlighting the fact that film can be seen as the optimum medium through which to explore the coming together of these two extremes.

In my study, I will seek to explore the themes of Childhood and War through the medium of film, examining why filmmakers have turned to the figure of the child to recount the horrors of the Second World War and why indeed, it is film which is the

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<sup>10</sup> ‘le [...] territoire de conquête de toute guerre, c’est le paradis de l’enfance’ in Vallet, p.88

<sup>11</sup> A major exception would of course be Vigo’s *Zéro de conduite*.

<sup>12</sup> Pierre Sorlin, ‘Children as war victims in post-war European cinema’ in Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (eds), *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008), p.109

<sup>13</sup> Neil Sinyard, *Children and the Movies* (London: B.T. Batsford 1992), pp. 37 - 38

artistic form best suited to do so. My corpus focuses on six (fiction) films released between 1946 and 1985, all made in occupied countries during the Second World War. As Lebeau has pointed out, the child as figure through which to explore the legacy of war and genocide in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is a common one<sup>14</sup> yet it is a subject upon which relatively little has been written.<sup>15</sup>

Out of these dozens of films on the subject, my work focuses on Roberto Rossellini's *Paisan* (1946) and *Germany Year Zero* (1947), René Clément's *Forbidden Games* (1952), Andrei Tarkovsky's *Ivan's Childhood* (1962), Jan Nemec's *Diamonds of the Night* (1964) and Elem Klimov's *Come and See* (1985). What is significant about this selection of films is, given that they belong to different periods of the post-war era, they differ considerably in terms of aesthetic. However, what I will contend is that *Come and See* signals a return to the aesthetics of neorealism, a return to a cinema of the seer, a cinema which - although unflinchingly realistic - is filtered through intervening non-realist works such as *Ivan's Childhood* and *Diamonds of the Night*.

Although made by experienced filmmakers, *Paisan*, *Germany Year Zero* and *Forbidden Games*, given their proximity to the events depicted in their films, have a unique immediacy. As I will explore, Rossellini's films in particular seek to

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<sup>14</sup> 'Rossellini's trilogy of Italian neorealism [...] helped to found a canon that includes Fred Zinnemann's *The Search* (1948), René Clément's *Forbidden Games* (1952), George Stevens' *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1959), Andrei Tarkovsky's *Ivan's Childhood* (1962) and *Mirror* (1974), [Victor] Erice's *The Spirit of the Beehive* (1973), Elem Klimov's *Come and See* (1985), Louis Malle's *Au revoir, les enfants* (1987), Bahram Beizai's *Bashu* (1989), Agnieszka Holland's *Europa, Europa* (1990), Guillermo Del Toro's *The Devil's Backbone* (2001), Bahman Ghobadi's *A Time For Drunken Horses* (2000) and *Turtles Can Fly* (2000), Denijal Hasanovic's *List* (2001), Mohsen Makhmalbaf's documentary *The Afghan Alphabet* (2002) and Marzieh Meshkini's *Stray Dogs* (2004). The list could go on.' Vicky Lebeau, *Childhood and Cinema* (London: Reaktion Books 2008), p.141

<sup>15</sup> A notable exception is the latest work by Karen Lury, *The Child in Film: Tears, Fears and Fairytales* (London: IB Taurus 2010)

reinvigorate the language of film, to ‘return to zero’. It is useful in this respect to note their chronological positioning: the infancy of the Deleuzian time-image.

The socio-historical situation for the directors of *Ivan’s Childhood* and *Diamonds of the Night* is markedly different. Whilst Rossellini and Clément were established filmmakers in their 40s, Tarkovsky and Nemec debuted with their films at the ages of 30 and 28 respectively. These two films - products of the post-Stalinist Thaw - are characterised by a formal experimentation drawing heavily on the legacy of the cinematic avant-garde (surrealism, expressionism). Made some two decades later, *Come and See* can be seen as a synthesis of the previous five works, combining as it does the shocking immediacy of Rossellini and the surrealism of Nemec: a final and defining work from a mature filmmaker. As Mark Le Fanu has observed, ‘in the best war films, surrealism is not an adjunct to the real but it is the very texture of the real itself’ and in few other films is this more strongly the case.<sup>16</sup> Lury adds that: ‘Many of the most intriguing examples of war films which feature children do seem to incorporate and negotiate non-sense, and offer up breaches that distort and distend their narrative structure and realist conventions.’<sup>17</sup>

Setting off from the point that both childhood and war are periods of extremes, of polarities, my study is structured in four main parts, examining the role and function of the child as witness; the child and landscape; childhood loss and childhood play. I have chosen this structure rather than a chronological one because it reflects better the centrality of the child figure and the child’s attempt to shift from passivity to activity in the context of the great upheaval of war.

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<sup>16</sup> A literary equivalent to Klimov’s film might be Jerzy Kosinski’s harrowing, picaresque novel *The Painted Bird* (1965).

<sup>17</sup> Lury, *The Child in Film* (London: I.B. Taurus 2010), p. 112

All my chapters are characterised by oscillation. For the child as witness, this oscillation comes in the form of the active and passive qualities of the child. For landscape, the theories of Sandro Bernardi and Martin Lefebvre highlight the oscillation between different modes of landscape (narrative-pictorial, intentional-spectatorial) and its relation to the the child. For childhood loss, the oscillation, especially in *Ivan's Childhood* and *Diamonds of the Night*, is between the worlds of dream, memory and fantasy and the reality of war with the presence of water aiding this shift. In terms of childhood play, the child attempts to master death through creativity.

In *I Bambini nel cinema (Children in Film)* Luciano Cecconi observes that the filmic representation of childhood has rarely tended to focus on what he calls 'normal children' and has instead focused on children as marginalised figures. The three major reasons Cecconi gives for this tendency are: 'the great attention of public opinion to the problems of childhood; the physiological propension of filmmakers towards hyperbole and a widespread sense of guilt on the part of society towards the child.'<sup>18</sup> Cecconi contends that society has throughout the decades provided less space and time for the child and therefore proliferation of *cinematic* childhoods can be attributed to a sense of guilt on the part of the adult. Both Reinhardt Kuhn and Cecconi subscribe to the view that childhood is a world of extremes. Whether it is

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<sup>18</sup> '[...]L'iperattenzione dell'opinione pubblica nei confronti dei problemi dell'infanzia, [...] una fisiologica propensione all'uso dell'iperbole da parte degli autori di cinema e [...] un diffuso senso di colpa della società nei confronti dei bambini, Luciano Cecconi, *I bambini nel cinema* (Milano: FrancoAngeli 2006), p.48



one of dynamism or stasis, ‘there seems little formal structure to the childhood universe.’<sup>19</sup>

### **1.1 Italian Neorealism and the figure of the child:**

#### **Between the Zavattinian cinema of ‘pedinamento’ and the Deleuzian bal(l)ade**

Gilles Deleuze has famously observed that the devastation of the post-war period and the arrival of neorealist cinema signaled a shift away from the movement image toward the time image. The Deleuzian theory of the seer will be discussed more fully in a later chapter but it will be useful in this introduction to link this aspect of Deleuzian theory to a perhaps lesser-known theoretical intervention from one of the progenitors of the neorealist movement, Cesare Zavattini<sup>20</sup> and his theory of *pedinamento* - ‘shadowing of man’.<sup>21</sup> In an interview with Pasquale Festa Campanile in 1951, Zavattini pronounced that ‘I would reiterate that the time is right to discard scripts and to follow man with the camera [...] We want to once again experience the wind on our backs, as a great painter used to say.’<sup>22</sup>

Observers such as Giorgio Tinazzi and Stefania Parigi remain sceptical about the seriousness with which Zavattini discussed neorealist cinema. In *Fisiologia dell’immagine*, Parigi argues that ‘[Zavattini’s] numerous metaphors – ‘shadowing’,

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<sup>19</sup> Kuhn, pp. 128 - 129

<sup>20</sup> Theorist and screenwriter Zavattini (1902 – 1989) is famous for his collaborations with Vittorio De Sica on films such as *The Children Are Watching Us* (1944), *Shoeshine* (1946), *Bicycle Thieves* (1948) and *Miracle in Milan* (1951). I will use the Italian term ‘pedinamento’ from this point on.

<sup>21</sup> The Garzanti Italian Dictionary defines ‘pedinare’ as ‘following someone with circumspection, to observe them or to spy upon their actions’, *Il grande dizionario della lingua italiana* (Milano: Garzanti 1998), p.1577.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Torno a dire che il tempo è maturo per buttare via i copioni e per pedinare gli uomini con la macchina da presa [...] Vogliamo riprovare il senso del vento sulla pelle: così diceva un grande pittore’, Pasquale Festa Campanile, ‘Il Cinema, Zavattini e la realtà’, *La Fiera Letteraria*, Number 47, 9 December 1951, in Cesare Zavattini, *Opere: Diario Cinematografico, Neorealismo ecc.* (Milano: Bompiani 2002), p.705

‘hole-in-the-wall’, ‘neighbour’, ‘scene of the crime’ – have become slogans, legendary formulas which have been interpreted in often distorted and reductive fashion by critics.<sup>23</sup> Parigi quotes Tinazzi who argues that by ‘pedinare’ or ‘shadowing’, Zavattini meant the investigation of an event in which subjective and objective memory were deposited, a point of convergence between specific and universal, of superficiality and profundity.<sup>24</sup> This more nuanced interpretation of Zavattinian theory is certainly far more relevant for the purposes of my study, linking closely with Deleuze:

‘[...] A real voyage by itself lacks the force necessary to be reflected in the imagination, the imaginary voyage by itself, does not have the force, as Proust says, to be verified in the real. That is why the imaginary and the real must be, rather, like two juxtaposable or superimposable parts of a single trajectory, two faces that ceaselessly interchange with one another, a mobile mirror.’<sup>25</sup>

In turn, Cecconi echoes Tinazzi and links *pedinamento* to the figure of the child. He argues that shadowing on the one hand and the narration of reality on the other produce through their constant interaction, representations of childhood which are deeply ambivalent.<sup>26</sup>

Zavattini’s conception of *pedinamento* suggests that the camera is relentless in its following of the films’ characters and the characters’ interaction with the world around them, a world in which, as Deleuze has suggested, ‘[...] the sensory-motor

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<sup>23</sup> ‘Le sue numerose metafore assunte al rango di slogan – ‘pedinamento’, ‘buco nel muro’, ‘coinquilino’, ‘luogo del delitto’ – [sono] formule divenute leggendarie e interpretate in modo spesso distorto e riduttivo dalla critica [...]’, Stefania Parigi, *Fisiologia dell’immagine: Il pensiero di Cesare Zavattini* (Torino: Lindau 2006), p. 203

<sup>24</sup> ‘[Indagare l’evento] deposito di memoria soggettiva e oggettiva, luogo di convergenza di particolare e universale, di superficiale e profondo’, Giorgio Tinazzi, ‘Cinema del pedinamento’ in *Una vita Za: Le opere e i giorni di Cesare Zavattini; Giornalismo, letteratura, cinema* (Parma: Guanda 1995), p. 233

<sup>25</sup> Gilles Deleuze, ‘What Children Say’ in *Essays Critical and Clinical* (Translated by Daniel W. Smith, Michael A. Greco)(London: Verso 1998), pp. 62 – 63.

<sup>26</sup> ‘Il pedinamento da una parte e la narrazione della realtà dall’altra producono, nella loro continua interazione, rappresentazioni della condizione infantile che possono essere considerate dallo studioso ora come indizio della realtà ora come costruzione dell’immaginario’, Cecconi, p.37

action or situation has been replaced by the stroll, the voyage and the continual return journey [and which] happens in any-space-whatever – marshalling yard, disused warehouse, the undifferentiated fabric of the city – in opposition to action which most often unfolded in the qualified space-time of the old realism.<sup>27</sup> This bringing together of Zavattinian *pedinamento* and the Deleuzian *bal(l)ade* takes place in several of the films I will be discussing – especially in *Paisan*, *Germany Year Zero* and *Come and See* – with the child figure poised between a stalking camera and the any-space-whatever. As I will discuss in further chapters, *Come and See* in a sense reprises the *pedinamento/bal(l)ade* form of the nascent time image, infusing it with more visceral power through the extraordinary use of Steadicam.<sup>28</sup>

Pierre Sorlin has discussed the shared sensibilities of some of the first filmmakers to represent the Second World War on film, a group that includes Rossellini and Clément:

‘[These filmmakers] had witnessed the war, had usually been mobilized and had gone through terrible experiences. Having lost many friends and relatives, they were keen on questioning the fate of their contemporaries in order to understand why the conflict had ended as it did.’<sup>29</sup>

Sorlin argues that in the post-war films dealing with children, ‘sorrow and hope are often interwoven’<sup>30</sup> and this is an important point to make because – again, as my study seeks to demonstrate – the representation of childhood experience of the Second World War is one of continual flux between polarities and extremes, of

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<sup>27</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* (Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam)(London: Continuum 2005), p. 213

<sup>28</sup> Invented by Garrett Brown, the Steadicam is ‘a balancing system for the hand-held camera that allows the operator to move anywhere and film continuously while keeping the image steady’, Serena Ferrara, *Steadicam: Techniques and Aesthetics* (Oxford: Focal Press 2001), p.xi. The first feature film to employ the steadicam was *Bound For Glory* (Hal Ashby 1975) and some of the most famous early examples of steadicam use include John Schlesinger’s *Marathon Man* (1976) and Stanley Kubrick’s *The Shining* (1980). Despite being published in 2001, Ferrara’s work makes no mention of the virtuoso steadicam work in Klimov’s film.

<sup>29</sup> Sorlin, ‘Children as war victims in post-war European cinema’, p.108

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*, p.117

contrasting worlds and states. Unlike other post-war films which were ‘content with mourning’, Sorlin contends that early war films featuring children ‘tried to find a way toward the future.’<sup>31</sup> However, to counter this, Sorlin also highlights the emphasis on death in these early films and the apparent harshness of some filmmakers against their protagonists who, ‘deprived of guidelines, become outlaws.’<sup>32</sup>

In her landmark study of European children during the Second World War, Dorothy MacArdle observes that, quite apart from the intense physical hardships, children of occupied Italy were, mentally, in a state of complete confusion and bewilderment:

‘Seeing the Allies of one phase become the enemies of the next, and all the propaganda reversed, young people felt that adults had blundered and betrayed them. They saw Fascism, which had replaced for them all laws of right and wrong, collapse, leaving no code standing, and saw the man whom they had been taught to deify fail them and fall.’<sup>33</sup>

This abject failure on the part of adults is crucial for the purposes of my study. In the neorealist films (in particular, Rossellini’s war trilogy) there is a clear sense of children being disillusioned by the actions of adults, a disillusionment which often leads to open antagonism and the threat on the child’s part of usurping adult supremacy. The passive-active presence of the child will be discussed more fully in my chapter on the child as Deleuzian seer but it is interesting to note the fluctuating relationship between the child and adult throughout my corpus, beginning with that of the neorealist child.

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<sup>31</sup> *ibid*, p.117

<sup>32</sup> *ibid*, p.121

<sup>33</sup> Dorothy MacArdle, *Children of Europe: A Study of the Children of Liberated Countries* (London: Victor Gollancz 1949) p.203

Christopher Wagstaff discusses how, in *Rome, Open City*, the children flaunt parental law by attempting an act of sabotage, arriving home late to the anger of their respective parents. However, the way in which this act of resistance is portrayed by Rossellini, as Wagstaff quite rightly argues, would suggest that the parents' admonishment, whilst 'morally edifying' essentially represents a barring of the act of resistance.<sup>34</sup> It is also an attempt on the part of the adult to put children firmly in their place by asserting that resistance is an adult activity. This open dismissal of the usefulness of children in such activities occurs at various points throughout the films in my corpus, most notably in Tarkovsky's *Ivan's Childhood*, where adult officers continue to remind the film's young protagonist that war is 'an adult business'.

Pasquale, the child in Rossellini's *Paisan* holds many similarities with young Marcello and his cohorts in *Rome, Open City*. The main difference between them is of course Pasquale's lack of any parental control but the movement and activity of the Neapolitan boy would no doubt have been exactly like that of Marcello had Pasquale found himself in the same situation. For Pasquale in *Paisan*, and indeed for Edmund in *Germany Year Zero*, the focus is perhaps not so much on acts of resistance (given that the war is now over) but on the struggle for survival, on the process of adapting to the post-war world. Jacques Rancière, in *Film Fables*, has suggested that the actions of Edmund are themselves acts of resistance. For Rancière, the whole of *Germany Year Zero* can be encapsulated in one scene, that in which Edmund serves his father the poisoned tea which will kill him:

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<sup>34</sup> Christopher Wagstaff, 'Il cinema europeo della resistenza' in L. Cigognetti, L. Servetti, P. Sorlin (eds), *L'immagine della resistenza in Europa: 1945 – 1960. Letteratura, cinema, arti figurative* (Bologna: Il Nove 1996) p.39

‘The whole film is here, in the relationship between Edmund’s meticulous gesture and the voice off-camera. Edmund acts while all the others talk, undaunted at the idea of turning words into deeds.’<sup>35</sup>

Sorlin too, discusses this scene. ‘There is something very chilling,’ he writes, ‘in the simplicity of a domestic scene which is also an execution.’<sup>36</sup>

As in the previous two films in Rossellini’s war trilogy, the child character, often disillusioned by perceived inactivity on the part of adults, takes action into his own hands. Rancière observes that young Edmund is ‘spurred into action by his vertiginous discovery of the pure ability to do, or not do, what others say, the discovery that he alone is responsible for his act, the sole agent of its coming into being.’<sup>37</sup> This discovery is made by several of the child protagonists in my corpus of films, beginning with the character of Paulette in Clément’s *Forbidden Games*.

## **1.2 *Forbidden Games*: Artwork against death**

Cecconi has argued that in the post-war world, the figure of the angelic child promulgated in the inter-war period by young Hollywood starlets such as Shirley Temple and Judy Garland disappears, to be replaced by the suffering child, even with children that die. The author makes reference to a selection of films released during this period such as Fred Zinnemann’s *The Search* (1948) and Ted Tetzlaff’s *The Window* (1949)<sup>38</sup> to illustrate his point but admits that the most effective shattering

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<sup>35</sup> Jacques Rancière, *Film Fables* (Translated by Emiliano Battista)(New York/Oxford: Berg 2006), p. 131

<sup>36</sup> Sorlin, p.121

<sup>37</sup> Rancière, p.131

<sup>38</sup> In terms of mise en scène if not in its Hollywoodian happy ending, Tetzlaff’s film in particular holds many similarities with Rossellini’s *Germany Year Zero*. Shot on location in New York City and making distinctive use of striking neo-expressionist lighting, the film tells of an imaginative young boy who witnesses a murder in a dilapidated New York tenement. His story is dismissed both by his

of the myth of the angelic child is manifested in the films of Rossellini and De Sica as well as in Luis Buñuel's *Los Olvidados* (1950). In all of these films, to an unprecedented degree, the image of childhood is closely bound to that of death, that is to say either murder (intentional or accidental) or suicide. Cecconi observes that this abrupt change of register can be attributed to a 'profound mutation of the collective image of a childhood that cannot avoid a sense of culpability for both past events (the destruction of war) and for what could happen in the future (atomic annihilation)'<sup>39</sup>

John O. Thompson has written of the representation of childhood death in the cinema and how rare the phenomenon is if compared to the representation of adult death. 'Cinema,' Thompson writes:

'buys into and is bound into death in many ways [insofar as] death is a feature of the world, insofar as there are deaths that are spectacular [and] people getting killed to great visual effect [is] a key part of cinema's repertoire [and] insofar as photographic capture keeps before our eyes the possibility of seeing the otherwise temporal and transient.'<sup>40</sup>

Thompson provides three reasons for so few child deaths on film, stating that 'to be a child on screen is to be not anonymous enough' to die for the brash kineticism of the violence, that having a child die young ultimately 'thwarts photography's mission rather than fulfilling it.'<sup>41</sup>

In René Clément's *Forbidden Games*, despite the fact that neither of the film's two child protagonists die, the representation of childhood is inextricably tangled

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parents and the police as just another product of his over-active imagination as he is hunted by the murderers, a neighbouring married couple.

<sup>39</sup> 'un profondo mutamento nell'immaginario collettivo collegato all'infanzia che non può non assimilare i sensi di colpa per ciò che è accaduto (le distruzioni della guerra) e per ciò che può accadere (l'annientamento atomico)', Cecconi, p.45

<sup>40</sup> John O. Thompson, 'Reflexions on Dead Children and Why There Are Not More of Them' in Gillian Avery and Kimberley Reynolds (eds), *Representations of Childhood Death* (London: Macmillan 2000) p. 210

<sup>41</sup> *ibid*, p.213

with the phenomenon of death. Paulette and Michel's construction of an animal cemetery serves as 'a kind of shared artwork against death' and in this respect, their final separation serves only as death's belated victory. 'Figuratively', Tyrus Miller suggests, 'the death of both children is the undoing of the figure articulated by their rituals and tokens of mourning.'<sup>42</sup>

Sorlin has observed somewhat harshly though certainly not without a degree of accuracy, that 'apart from De Sica and Rossellini, the directors interested in the aftermath of war were second-rate artists whose names have long been forgotten.'<sup>43</sup> Along with filmmakers such as Charles Crichton (*Hue & Cry*) and Radvani Geza (*Somewhere in Europe*), Sorlin includes René Clément, director of *Forbidden Games*. In the body of films I am concerned with, Clément is at present the director with the lowest critical standing, despite having directed important films, public and critical successes such as *The Battle of the Rails* (1946) and *Plein Soleil* (1957) as well as *Forbidden Games*<sup>44</sup>. It is certainly true that of all the works in my corpus, *Forbidden Games* is film which veers closest to sentimentality, that it lacks the formal or structural complexity of Rossellini, Tarkovsky, Nemec or Klimov, that it was made during the years of the *tradition de qualité* so detested by New Wave critics and filmmakers. However, following the work of Tyrus Miller (who discusses the film alongside *Come and See* in his essay 'The Burning Babe: Children, Film Narrative and Figures of Historical Witness'), I would argue that it is a vital film in the representation of childhood experience of the Second World War. What makes *Forbidden Games* more than worthy of consideration - and indeed crucial in the

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<sup>42</sup> Miller, p.216

<sup>43</sup> Sorlin, p.123

<sup>44</sup> *Forbidden Games* did however win numerous prizes worldwide, including the Leone d'oro at the 1952 Venice Film Festival and Academy Award for Best Foreign Film.



development of my study - is that it is the film which more than any other (and certainly *before* any other), focuses on the child's creation of its own world from the trauma of war. In *Forbidden Games*, there is a strong sense of withdrawal from the traumas of the adult world, an element largely absent in the neorealist films of the immediate post-war era. Pasquale and Edmund attempt to create a world for themselves apart from the war but their efforts end in failure. Of course it could be said that Paulette and Michel's efforts too, ultimately end in failure but the fact that they succeed, however temporarily, to create what Miller has called 'an artwork out of death' is nonetheless significant.

The children's withdrawal into their own private world is initiated by 'adult' action (war, conflict) but, unlike the figures of Pasquale or indeed Edmund, Paulette and Michel do not suffer because of this exclusion, they are shown to be stimulated by it: their playing with death represents, paradoxically, a living relation between them – a source of vitality, as Miller has quite rightly suggested. Apart from the brief glimpses of friendship and playfulness in the opening sequence of *Come and See*, it is a vitality which is almost wholly absent from the lives of all the child characters of my corpus. When Paulette and Michel are together, they are content and perhaps this too is a crucial point, the fact that the child characters are *together*, sharing an experience. For differing reasons, Pasquale and Edmund do not experience this, neither do Ivan or Flor<sup>45</sup>. The exceptions are of course the two protagonists of Nemec's *Diamonds of the Night* but it is clear that their shared experience is anything but a source of happiness, their battle against death anything but vital.

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<sup>45</sup> In the 'reality' of war, Ivan is not able to share his traumatic experience but in his dreams, he is shown to revel in play with other children. Flor in Klimov's film shares a brief moment of carefree play with his cousin before he is confronted with the full horrors of war. These sequences will be more fully explored in subsequent chapters.

Despite its flaws, Clément's film presages *Ivan's Childhood* and *Diamonds of the Night* in the child characters' withdrawal into the world of imagination. The films of Tarkovsky and Nemec, with their splintering into multiple spatio-temporal spheres, continue the poetics of Clément in this respect.

### **1.3 Dream, Anxiety and the Flashback in *Ivan's Childhood* and *Diamonds of the Night***

In *The Child in Film*, Lury discusses post-New Wave representations of childhood and war, observing that:

‘the qualities of childhood experience, which is narcissistic, fragmented, temporally chaotic, often context-less, are counter to the demands of the conventional narratives of history, which construct an omniscient and chronological perspective, thereby producing comprehensible, coherent stories informed by cause and effect.’<sup>46</sup>

*Ivan's Childhood* and *Diamonds of the Night* are both feature débuts from young directors working in the midst of the post-Stalinist Thaw. Therefore, as Lury suggests, they differ greatly from those of Rossellini or Clément. The two opposed worlds of adult and child, of war and peace clearly delineated in *Forbidden Games* and contained in that film within a fairly chronological perspective are rendered in the disturbed spatio-temporal progression in *Ivan's Childhood* and *Diamonds of the Night* which is now ‘riddled with gaps and inconsistencies which represent the child's experience and, in some instances, the interference of the adult's memory upon that experience.’<sup>47</sup> As products of the post-Stalinist thaw, these films, as Jan Zalman writes, ‘are part of a whole current of European thought seeking among the

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<sup>46</sup> Lury, p.110

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.* (forthcoming, 2009/2010)

ruins of humanity left by the Second World War and among the remnants of failed philosophical and political ideas the roots of evil hanging like some monstrous cloud.<sup>48</sup>

Within the development of my argument, both *Ivan's Childhood* and *Diamonds of the Night* are undoubtedly crucial works. A decade after Clément's *Forbidden Games* and in the wake of Andrzej Wajda's famous war trilogy *A Generation* (1954), *Kanal* (1956) and *Ashes and Diamonds* (1957), these films come from filmmakers a generation removed from the Second World War, directors who were roughly the age of their child protagonists during the conflict itself.<sup>49</sup> As Sorlin observes:

‘The younger filmmakers had not suffered as much as the previous generation during the conflict and, with the passing of time, they could stand back and judge events more calmly.’<sup>50</sup>

After the bal(l)ade form of the neorealist films is given a conventional narrative structure in Clément's *Forbidden Games*, in the films of Tarkovsky and Nemec, the structures of the films themselves come to reflect the strained, traumatised consciousnesses of the young protagonists. Lury suggests that ‘the context of war is experienced by the child as irrational but remains one in which they must act decisively [...] in order to survive (although they may not do so).’<sup>51</sup> This is certainly the case with *Ivan's Childhood* and *Diamonds of the Night*. Both Ivan and Danny and Manny experience the war as irrational but nonetheless act decisively, moving ceaselessly forward in their quests for revenge (in Ivan's case) and survival (in the case of the boys in Nemec's film). This is an important distinction to make between the immediate post-war films of Rossellini and Clément and those of Tarkovsky and

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<sup>48</sup> Jan Zalman, *Films and Filmmakers in Czechoslovakia* (Prague: Orbis 1968) p.62

<sup>49</sup> Tarkovsky was born in 1932, Nemec in 1936.

<sup>50</sup> Sorlin, p. 108

<sup>51</sup> Lury, pp. 143 - 144

Nemec, the fact that the apparent wandering in *Paisan* and *Germany Year Zero*, the withdrawal of *Forbidden Games*, gives way to propulsive forward movement, apparent *activity* rather than *passivity*. However, whilst the characters move *physically* forward, psychologically they appear to move *back* into dreams and fragments of memory. Like Paulette in Clément's film, therefore, there is a movement of withdrawal to escape the horrors of the present.

The flashback/dream sequences vary in form and function for Tarkovsky and Nemec but in both films, there are strong elements of ambiguity about these sequences' spatio-temporal positioning (Are the scenes pre-war, are they the character's subjective visions?). There is a constant flux of spatialities, of temporalities. Again, in *Ivan's Childhood* and *Diamonds of the Night*, perhaps to a greater degree than the other films in my corpus, attempt to fuse completely in both form and content with the inner worlds of the young protagonists

In *Les Mondes d'Andrei Tarkovskï*, Kovács and Szilágyi note that the post-Stalinist period saw the release of several films on the theme of childhood by filmmakers such as Bondartchouk, Koutziev and Abuladze:

'[the theme of childhood] allowed for the expression of [the idea of ] the re-establishment of order [...] During this period, the representation of childhood had a meaning which was more or less precise: [highlighting] the innocent victim of a cruel society.'<sup>52</sup>

The authors note that whilst *Ivan's Childhood*, with its foregrounding of the heroic child, love on the front and flashbacks on the part of the protagonist, would appear superficially to fit into the post-Stalinist trend of films representing childhood,

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<sup>52</sup> '[le theme de l'enfance] permettait aussi d'exprimer [l'idée du] rétablissement de l'ordre [...] A l'époque, représenter l'enfance avait une signification plus ou moins précise: la victime innocente de la société cruelle', Bálint András Kovács and Akos Szilágyi, *Les Mondes d'Andrei Tarkovski* (Lausanne: Editions L'Age d'Homme 1987) p.48

Tarkovsky transcends the conventions of the genre. He does this most fundamentally, I would suggest, through the death of Ivan. François Vallet has linked *Ivan's Childhood* closely with *Germany Year Zero*. The most obvious similarities between them are the physical resemblance of the actors but both Edmund and Ivan share the same tragic fate, '[they] both breathe the same polluted air. Both are children of hate.'<sup>53</sup>

I would push this further and argue that there are similarities not only between Edmund and Ivan but between Pasquale and Ivan. Like Pasquale, Ivan appears to be charged with the conviction that simply because he dresses and acts like an adult, he is and should be treated as one.<sup>54</sup> This confidence is largely absent in the character of Edmund. The attitude embodied by the confident strut of Pasquale as the camera follows him right to left early in the Naples episode of *Paisan* is present also in Ivan, notably in his brusque exchanges with his superiors. If Edmund can be classified as a Deleuzian seer, as can Pasquale (though the latter, perhaps to a slightly lesser extent), Ivan certainly cannot, given that he does not suffer motor-helplessness, and that he does not oscillate between the passivity and over-activity discussed by Jaimey Fisher regarding the child characters in neorealism. Ivan is predominantly 'over-active' and certainly not a passive figure. Indeed he is riled by his superiors' suggestion that he should leave the front and desperately wants to contribute to the war effort, driven, as Vallet notes, by all-consuming hate towards an enemy that murdered his parents.

The question of the nature and function of the opposing worlds in *Ivan's Childhood* is undoubtedly a crucial one and I will explore this fully as part of my

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<sup>53</sup> 'Tout deux respirent le même air vicié. Tout deux sont les enfants de haine.' Vallet, p.177. Edmund and Ivan are the only two protagonists in my corpus who suffer death. The ending of *Diamonds of the Night* is ambiguous but the indication is that Danny and Manny do indeed survive – there is no ambiguity about the deaths of Edmund and Ivan.

<sup>54</sup> This attitude is also evident in Flor in *Come and See*.

four main chapters, in particular those sections on Landscape and Childhood Loss. However, at his point, it would be useful to return to Kovács and Szilágyi whose discussion of the opposing *mondes* in Tarkovsky's film are particularly illuminating. As I have noted, the authors argue that despite the fact that, chronologically, *Ivan's Childhood* is part of a trend in Post-Stalinist Soviet film, Tarkovsky's singular poetics draws the film out of the established genre conventions. The director accomplishes this most effectively through use of the aforementioned dream sequences, an element highlighted by Jean-Paul Sartre in his famous defence of the film against charges of formalism. The use of dream sequences is crucial in my study because, for the first time, the 'wound' between the worlds of adulthood and childhood is given form, is realised in clear formal terms. The juxtaposition of light and dark, fire and water is fundamental in this respect and, again, will be fully examined in subsequent chapters but at this point, I would say that the power of the visual aspects of Tarkovsky's film is matched and indeed augmented by the aural. The use of sound is an important part of my study and through close analysis of the aural aspects of the films in my corpus, I hope to contribute to the recent redressing of the relative paucity of interventions on film sound<sup>55</sup>. I will suggest that, specifically in the three films from Eastern Europe, sound assumes heightened importance. *Ivan's Childhood* is a key text in this regard because Tarkovsky, I would suggest, is the first 'director of childhood' to fully embrace the possibilities of sound. Cecconi has pointed out the importance of sound in films about childhood experience, citing two major reasons:

'[Firstly,] the use of sound facilitates the recovery of profound emotions upon which many evocations of childhood are based [Secondly,] the stories based

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<sup>55</sup> Lury's *The Child in Film* in particular discusses the use of sound in several scenes in *Diamonds of the Night* and *Come and See*.

on childhood memories are often characterised by [...] ellipsis so a knowing use of sound helps the viewer understand the flow of time in the narration.<sup>56</sup>

Made two years after *Ivan's Childhood*, Jan Nemec's *Diamonds of the Night* is one of the major films of the Czech New Wave of the 1960s. Based on Arnost Lustig's novel *Darkness Casts No Shadow*, the film polarized opinion upon its release in 1964.<sup>57</sup> Whilst discussing the film, Jan Zalman, in *Films and Filmmakers in Czechoslovakia*, compares *Diamonds of the Night* to Robert Enrico's *La rivière du hibou* (*An Occurrence At Owl Creek Bridge*, 1962), part of a trilogy of short films adapted from American Civil War stories by Ambrose Bierce. Zalman argues that whilst the flashbacks in Enrico's film provide 'an idyllic and strongly emotional contrast to the dramatic situation in Nemec's film [this] is replaced by the method of psychic automatism, well-known to the surrealists.'<sup>58</sup> In its use of flashback, *An Occurrence At Owl Creek Bridge* might be better compared with *Ivan's Childhood* whilst Nemec's film has more in common with another film in Enrico's trilogy, *Chickamauga* (1962)<sup>59</sup>, an extraordinary yet largely neglected film about the child's experience of war.

Cecconi's observations on childhood as a stage situated at the two extremes in human life: the biological childhood and the socio-cultural 'return to childhood' of old age is of particular usefulness when applied to Nemec's film in which the young

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<sup>56</sup> 'La partecipazione indotta dal suono facilita quel processo di recupero delle emozioni profonde sul quale si basano molte rievocazioni dell'infanzia [...] Le storie basate sui ricordi d'infanzia spesso sono caratterizzate da procedimenti ellittici, quindi un uso sapiente del suono aiuta lo spettatore a percepire con maggiore precisione lo scorrere del tempo contenuto nella narrazione', Cecconi, p.89

<sup>57</sup> The reaction of French critics in particular encompasses the general critical response to the film. Luc Mollet of *Cahiers du cinéma* (166/7, May/June 1965, 62) described the film as 'a bad five-minute short replayed fifteen times' whilst Robert Benayoun of *Positif* (No. 71, September 1965, pp.39 – 48) compared the film more than favourably to the work of Luis Buñuel and Alain Resnais.

<sup>58</sup> Jan Zalman, *Films and Filmmakers in Czechoslovakia* (Prague: Orbis 1968), p.60

<sup>59</sup> In the film, a young boy strays from his family plantation into the forest of Tennessee and, after awaking from sleep, is faced with fantastical visions of critically injured soldiers crawling through the forest.

are pitted against the old. The ‘wound’ Vallet speaks of between the world of the child and the adult is rendered in *Diamonds of the Night*, not through the contrasting *mise-en-scene* (as in the *mondes* of *Ivan’s Childhood*) but through action. In Nemec’s film, the accomplished formal elegance of *Ivan’s Childhood*, the clear division between opposing ‘worlds’ is replaced by greater ambiguity. The roughness and immediacy of Nemec’s aesthetic recalls the cinema of the neorealists, the director’s stalking camera movement apparently signalling a return to Zavattinian *pedinamento* or the Deleuzian *bal(l)ade* form of Rossellini’s films (completed by Klimov’s *Come and See*). In common with *Ivan’s Childhood*, the relentless forward trajectory of the characters is countered by an apparent withdrawal into dream and fantasy but of course this withdrawal is not to a lyrical world of peace. Furthermore, whilst in *Ivan’s Childhood*, the child figure ‘withdraws’ of his own volition, in *Diamonds of the Night* there is no such determination - it seems that it is events of the past that appear to aggressively pursue the young protagonist, haunting the present, rather than the child actively pursuing the past. Nemec’s film departs from *Ivan’s Childhood* and looks forward to *Come and See* because whilst it appears to be built on apparently neorealist aesthetics (location shooting, non-professional actors, loosening of spatio-temporal co-ordinates) the film - as previously noted and as will be explored throughout my work - has a marked, open surrealist influence which often verges on the grotesque, an element strongly in evidence in Nemec’s depiction of the elderly home guard soldiers. Zalman echoes Cecconi’s observations on the links between childhood and old age. ‘Mankind has grown old in the course of innumerable dirty wars without becoming any wiser or better’ he writes, adding that Nemec’s focus is on ‘a senile world that never learns [...] a humanity which has



betrayed its own dignity.’<sup>60</sup> It is clear that the adult completely repudiates his role as protector of the young in *Diamonds of the Night*. As signaled by the ending of Paulette and Michel’s games in Clément’s film, the capture of the two boys signals a shattering ‘victory for death’.

The portrayal of old age offered in *Diamonds of the Night* is by far the most scathing of all the films in my corpus, going much further than Rossellini and Klimov in *Germany Year Zero* and *Come and See*. As Zalman notes, the representation of old age provides ample evidence of the fact that Nemec made the film as ‘an act of protest’. Indeed, there can surely be no stronger condemnation of a society in which half-starving children are hunted down and forced to watch as old men gorge on food and drink. I have suggested how Tarkovsky’s film relies heavily on detailed sound design but the role of sound assumes critical importance in *Diamonds of the Night* as it will do in *Come and See*, both films featuring soundscapes of extraordinary complexity.<sup>61</sup> The use of complex soundscapes, like the presence of water in which Nemec and Klimov allows for further merging and oscillation between states.

#### **1.4 *Come and See*: A Return to the Deleuzian seer**

‘If there is a lesson to be drawn from all this, I would say that it is  
only when memory is filtered through the imagination  
that the films we make will have real depth.’<sup>62</sup>  
Louis Malle

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<sup>60</sup> Zalman, p.59

<sup>61</sup> I discussed the use of sound in a paper entitled ‘Subjective Soundscapes in Nemec’s *Diamonds of the Night* and Klimov’s *Come and See*’ which I gave at the *Screen Studies Conference*, Glasgow, 5 July 2008 and will draw on this work throughout my study.

<sup>62</sup> Louis Malle, *Au revoir, les enfants and Lacombe, Lucien* (London: Faber and Faber 1989), p. 158

Released in 1985, *Come and See* was one of several Russian films released to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Great Patriotic War. In her 1994 article 'Post-Stalinist Cinema and the Myth of World War II', Denise J. Youngblood has noted that if *Ivan's Childhood* can be considered the first great Soviet War film, then *Come and See* is the last. Youngblood compares the two films and discusses the 'epic and bombastic' scale of Klimov's film as opposed to that of Tarkovsky:

'They are both significant works by major directors; they were widely seen and talked about in the Soviet Union and to a lesser extent, abroad; and they illustrate the remarkable thematic and formal continuities in the war genre over nearly a quarter of a century, a period during which, as we now know, the USSR was slowly expiring. Finally, they represent the beginning and the end of the genre.'<sup>63</sup>

In my study, I will suggest that not only is there a link between *Ivan's Childhood* and *Come and See*, but that Klimov's film is essentially a product of the previous five films in my corpus. In particular, the film is a return to the Deleuzian cinema of the seer of neorealism filtered through the formal experimentation of the intervening works. This mature work, from a filmmaker in his mid-fifties, draws not only on his own memories of life under Nazi occupation but also on those of Ales Adamovich, the author whose novel provides the literary source for *Come and See*. In a moving interview about the film conducted shortly before his death, Klimov revealed that the work (which would turn out to be his last) was a film he felt he needed to make.<sup>64</sup> This, in contrast to *Ivan's Childhood* and *Come and See* (the début features of Tarkovsky and Nemec) and more in line with films such as Louis Malle's *Au revoir*,

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<sup>63</sup> Denise J. Youngblood, 'Post-Stalinist Cinema and the Myth of World War II: Tarkovsky's *Ivan's Childhood* and Klimov's *Come and See*' in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 1994, p.415.

<sup>64</sup> In an extensive interview with Klimov, included on the 2006 UK DVD release of *Come and See*, the director outlines three major reasons for making the film. Firstly, he states he had always wanted to make a film about the Second World War; secondly he felt that at the time (1985, the height of the Cold War), another global conflict was on the horizon and thirdly, he had felt disappointed by his previous film *Agony*, a historical film set during the Russian revolution.

*les enfants* (1987), John Boorman's *Hope and Glory* (1987) and Steven Spielberg's *Empire of the Sun* (1987). The latter films, as noted by Lury, have less evidential historical value than the immediate post-war films and [are] based on memoirs and stories made many years after the war(s) it depicts.<sup>65</sup> *Come and See* does indeed link closely in its genesis and function with Malle's film. According to Hugo Frey, *Au revoir, les enfants* 'is [an] attempt to reintegrate a childhood trauma into [Malle's] adult life. History, autobiography and filmmaking come together in this work to form a site for painful but curative 'working through'.<sup>66</sup> However, unlike *Au revoir, les enfants* - in which the horrors of Nazi occupation are shown to slowly permeate the lives of children - *Come and See* has the child figure faced immediately with the full, visceral impact of conflict, becoming – crucially - the body upon which the horrors of war are inscribed.

In her wide-ranging study, *Russian War Films: On The Cinema Front, 1914 – 2005*, Youngblood discusses the 'fortieth-anniversary films' of 1985, noting that 'with one significant exception they broke no new ground',<sup>67</sup> this exception being *Come and See*, a film which she describes as 'relentlessly grim' and which 'sought to bridge the divide between the grand and the intimate views of the war.'<sup>68</sup> Youngblood's comments on Klimov's film echo the central crux of my argument, the fact that because of the centrality of a liminal figure such as the child, the films I am considering are canvases of constant movement - characters, landscapes and

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<sup>65</sup> Lury, p.126

<sup>66</sup> Hugo Frey, *Louis Malle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2004), p.120

<sup>67</sup> Denise J. Youngblood, *Russian War Films: On The Cinema Front, 1914 – 2005* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas 2007), p.193

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.* pp. 193 - 194

other elements are in continual flux and exchange.<sup>69</sup> *Come and See* certainly does act as a 'bridge' between two views of the war, oscillating as it does between the grand and the intimate, the unflinchingly realistic and the grotesquely expressionist. Klimov's film, as I will discuss in the following chapters, is both the culmination and summation of my corpus of films. Coming after the neorealism of Rossellini, the lyricism of Clément, the formalism of Tarkovsky and Nemec, Klimov's film brings together all these strands in a work of depth and breadth.

In his article 'Rossellini and Neorealism', Christopher Wagstaff argues that with Rossellini's neorealist films, 'the viewer watches the characters learn,'<sup>70</sup> an observation which is rather problematically applied to *Come and See*. The fact that Flor undergoes a dramatic transformation cannot be denied, but Wagstaff's reference to 'learning' suggests a process of edification of which there is no trace in *Come and See*. Flor does indeed undergo a transformation but it is a traumatic, unbearably painful process, certainly brutalising more than edifying, a process which leaves indelible mental and physical scars. Despite this, the links between the neorealist cinema of Rossellini and Klimov's *Come and See* are, as I will elucidate in later chapters, several. In terms of camera movement, the film sees a return to the Zavattinian 'cinema of pedinamento', a process begun in *Diamonds of the Night* but reaching its fullest expression in Klimov's film through the use of steadicam

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<sup>69</sup> References here to 'continual flux' and 'exchange' recall Deleuze's use of the Nietzschean concept of 'becoming'. As Barbara Kennedy writes in *Deleuze and the Cinema: The Aesthetics of Sensation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2000), 'It is the senses through which [...] experience or 'becoming' is articulated. Thus, 'becoming' or 'transience' implies that sensation reveals the nature of reality in a purer way than the reflective and rational consciousness and language.' (p.87). This could be applied to *Come and See* but only in part because the Deleuzian concept of becoming, 'predicated upon the sensual, through the body [...] is not fixed in any singular identity' (p.87) whereas in *Come and See*, it is predominantly fixed in the identity of Flor. At most, it shifts between fixed and non-fixed. I will examine this further in subsequent chapters.

<sup>70</sup> Christopher Wagstaff, 'Rossellini and Neorealism' in David Forgacs, Sarah Lutton, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (eds), *Rossellini: Magician of the Real* (London: BFI Publishing 2000), p. 45

photography. In the earlier film, the forward movement of the jittery, unstable hand-held camera invites identification with the young boys' traumatised mental state but unlike Klimov's film, *Diamonds of the Night* unfolds in separate spatio-temporal spheres with the camera's movements predominantly (but not exclusively) lateral in direction. In *Come and See*, the camera's trajectory is smoother and, rather than lateral, is more often propelled in a forward direction, *pursuing* - 'shadowing' - its young protagonist whilst also managing to capture in striking medium close-ups the dramatic physiognomic transformation he undergoes. Drawing in part on Martine Beugnet's discussion of the 'body-landscape'<sup>71</sup>, I will argue that by the end of Klimov's film, the face of Flor becomes a corporeal equivalent of the devastated, rubble-strewn cityscapes of *Paisà* and *Germany Year Zero*: barren, lifeless, war-scarred. Jacques Aumont in *Du visage au cinéma* observes that:

'A face filmed intensely is always a close-up, even taken from very far. A close-up always shows a face, a physiognomy. 'Close-up' and 'Face' are therefore interchangeable and at the root of both is a process which produces a surface which is sensitive and legible and which at the same time produces what Deleuze calls an Entity.'<sup>72</sup>

I have for differing reasons outlined links between Klimov's film and *Ivan's Childhood* and then between *Come and See* and the neorealist films of Rossellini, but what of the remaining two works and their relationship to 'the last great Soviet war film'? In formal terms but also in terms of tone, the films of Clément and Klimov appear to be completely antithetical: the soft lyricism of *Forbidden Games* is

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<sup>71</sup> Martine Beugnet, *Cinema and Sensation: French Cinema and the Art of Transgression* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2007), pp. 94 - 98

<sup>72</sup> 'Un visage filmé intensivement est toujours un gros plan, même s'il est très loin. Un gros plan montre toujours un visage, une physiognomie. 'Gros plan' et 'visage' sont donc interchangeables, et ce qui est à leur commune racine, c'est l'opération qui produit une surface sensible et lisible à la fois qui produit, comme dit Deleuze, une Entité', Jacques Aumont, *Du visage au cinéma* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma 1992), p.85

contrasted starkly by the harsh, neo-expressionism of the Soviet film. What unites the films is that, unlike those of Rossellini, unlike *Ivan's Childhood* or *Diamonds of the Night*, Paulette and Flor are orphaned in the films' narrative present.<sup>73</sup> In both films the death of their parents marks a turning point in the films' development. What is intriguing, especially given their differing ages, is their respective reactions to loss. Paulette withdraws into a childhood world where she is active, Flor is thrown into the world of adults where he becomes increasingly passive, suffering 'motor-helplessness'.

In terms of overall structure, of sheer scale, *Diamonds of the Night* and *Come and See* differ considerably. However, the films' innovative, non-naturalistic use of sound and stalking camera movement set them apart from the other works in my corpus. What also links them - and sound design and camera movement are vitally important in this respect - is the *assailment* of the child figure. Whereas in Rossellini's two films, Clément's *Forbidden Games* and Tarkovsky's *Ivan's Childhood*, the child is granted a degree of freedom<sup>74</sup> in a world in which they are left to fend for themselves, the child characters in Nemec and Klimov's films are in constant flight from outside forces. Following Deleuze, Hugo Frey's discussion of Malle's films is particularly apposite in this respect. In *Cinema 2*, Deleuze writes that 'in Malle, it is always a *movement of the world* which brings the character to incest, prostitution, or disgrace, and makes him capable of a crime [...]'<sup>75</sup>. Frey follows on from this by arguing that the Mallean film can therefore be considered 'one in which

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<sup>73</sup> They are of course not the only orphans in my corpus of films: Pasquale, Edmund and Ivan are orphans too, but the loss of their respective parents has either already occurred (Pasquale) or is remembered in flashback (Ivan). Edmund has lost his mother and poisons his father.

<sup>74</sup> Even if, in *Ivan's Childhood*, the young protagonist is only able to enjoy this freedom in his dreams.

<sup>75</sup> Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 58 (my italics)

the fictional characters are secondary to the forces of the cinematic world in which they live.’<sup>76</sup>

It is true, of course, that being children in a suffocatingly adult world, all the young characters in my body of films are ‘secondary to the forces of the cinematic world in which they live’ but in *Diamonds of the Night* and *Come and See* there is a strong sense that not only are the characters secondary they are stalked relentlessly (both physically and psychologically) by the forces of war. In *Diamonds of the Night*, the two boys find themselves not only bombarded by foreboding images from the past, but also physically hunted down like animals. In *Come and See*, Flor, having been bombarded by the terrifying sights and sounds of war, finds himself witness to genocidal horror. Unlike the rest of the village, he is spared and toyed with by enemy soldiers.

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<sup>76</sup> Frey, p.50

## 2. The Child as Witness

In his 2003 essay ‘The Burning Babe: Children, Film Narrative, and the Figures of Historical Witness’, Tyrus Miller discusses the shift from movement image to time image outlined by Deleuze in *Cinema 2*. In Italian neorealism, Miller points out:

‘The [...] protagonist is no longer primarily a protagonist of an action that will effect some sort of change in the historical situation, but rather a protagonist of witness – a point of entry into the central imperative of these films to “come and see”’<sup>77</sup>

Miller’s observation, whilst centering here on the role of neorealism and the nascent time-image links the neorealist cinema of Rossellini to Klimov’s neo-expressionist *Come and See* – a film which he will go on to discuss. Child characters, he argues, readily fulfill the conditions for the role of seer, ‘dispossessed of the possibility of action and for the imaginative confusion of objective and subjective aspects of the witnessed scene.’<sup>78</sup> Miller calls these characters ‘pure witnesses’ but this category, whilst undoubtedly useful, does not sufficiently reflect the complex function of the child in neorealism. The child in *Paisan* and *Germany Year Zero*, I would suggest, cannot simply be characterised a passive witness. The work of Jaimey Fisher rather than that of Miller is far more convincing, especially with reference to neorealism. That being said, if the categories of seer and ‘pure witness’ are problematic in relation to the neorealist child, they can be more unambiguously applied to the child in *Come and See*, a figure who is not only a seer, but also a *hearer*. Klimov invites

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<sup>77</sup> Miller, p.230

<sup>78</sup> *ibid*, p.231



the viewer to ‘come and see’ (and to ‘come and hear’) and it is for this reason that Flor is closer to the ‘pure witness’ than Pasquale or Edmund.

My focus on this chapter is primarily on the films of Rossellini and Klimov but I will of course engage with the other three works in my corpus. The reason for my emphasis on *Paisan*, *Germany Year Zero* and *Come and See* is their respective child protagonists’ clear function as witnesses to the devastation of war. In terms of structure too, the three films share many similarities, being less tightly constructed and linear and closer to the Deleuzian bal(l)ade form. This, in contrast with the linear, classical structure of *Forbidden Games* and the modernist, flashback structures of *Ivan’s Childhood* and *Diamonds of the Night*. In the latter two films, gaps and fissures halt and disturb narrative progression, providing important insight into the characters’ mental state.

Paulette, Michel, Ivan, Danny and Manny (the child characters in the non-seer films) are characters whose visceral impact with war - whilst undoubtedly brutal - leads to withdrawal into private worlds, a retreat manifested through both external and psychological phenomena (the play in *Forbidden Games*, the flashbacks in *Ivan’s Childhood* and *Diamonds of the Night*). Although this withdrawal, this barrier from the outside world is dangerously brittle - the reality of war frequently seeping through - it nonetheless represents an avenue of escape which the characters in the films of Rossellini and Klimov (Pasquale, Edmund and Flor) simply do not have. In *Paisan*, *Germany Year Zero* and *Come and See*, there is a strong sense of the child figure being *forced to endure* adult-made trauma. Crucially – and echoing Deleuze - it is the *world around the characters which controls them*. In his discussion of the

crisis of the action image, Deleuze observes that it is a ‘movement of the world which supplements the faltering movement of the character,’<sup>79</sup> adding that ‘the frightened child faced with danger cannot run away, but the world sets about running away for him and takes him with it, as if on a conveyor belt.’<sup>80</sup> This concept, crucial in my discussion on the child as witness, is manifested most clearly in *Come and See* as opposed to Rossellini’s neorealist films. From the moment he arrives at the partisan camp, Klimov’s protagonist is continually on the move, with the director’s Zavattinian camera<sup>81</sup> in close pursuit.

Having outlined some of the similarities between *Paisan* and *Germany Year Zero* and *Come and See*, it would be appropriate to now discuss how Klimov’s film differs from the neorealist works. The clearest difference is undoubtedly in breadth and scale.<sup>82</sup> Whilst the three films broadly share the Deleuzian bal(l)ade form, *Come and See*, made some forty years later, is technically far more accomplished. Its use of colour<sup>83</sup>, widescreen cinematography and stereo sound make for a richer audio-visual experience which facilitates Klimov’s objective: to allow the viewer to share Flor’s eyes and ears as he experiences the horrors of Nazi Occupation. *Paisan* and *Germany Year Zero* appear comparatively sedate alongside the extraordinarily vivid diegetic world of *Come and See* but this is not only due to the greater technical advancements available to Klimov but also to their setting in time and space. The neorealist films are concerned with the immediate aftermath of war in Italy and Germany whilst

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<sup>79</sup> Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p.56

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.* p.56

<sup>81</sup> See introduction for my discussion of Zavattini’s cinema of ‘pedinamento’.

<sup>82</sup> In her article on *Ivan’s Childhood* and *Come and See*, Youngblood observes that Klimov’s film is ‘on the surface [...] a rather conventional Soviet film, too long, too clichéd, too bombastic, too melodramatic, too *epic*’ but nonetheless admits that it ‘combines the epic scope of the Socialist Realist film with the personal sensibilities of other films of the genre.’ Denise J. Youngblood, ‘Post-Stalinist Cinema and the Myth of World War II: Tarkovsky’s *Ivan’s Childhood* and Klimov’s *Come and See*’ in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* (Volume 14, Number 4, 1994) pp.413 - 419

<sup>83</sup> Of the six works in my corpus, *Come and See* is the only film in colour.

*Come and See*, set in Belarus in 1943, is as firmly mired in the war as Flor is in the steaming bog.

Although the child characters of both filmmakers can be thought of as seers (and hearers), the Klimovian seer differs to that of Rossellini. *Come and See*'s foregrounding of the act of seeing, of witness (beginning from the film's title) implies that the film adopts a far more aggressive approach. As I will discuss, moving restlessly across Klimov's at times neo-expressionist mise-en-scene, the director's gaze, rather than merely following his protagonist, often fuses with him. The intermittent use of subjective camera and free indirect discourse - or, in Bruce Kawin's terms, the use of sight- and soundscreen - is the clearest formal difference between the respective works.

Aside from these formal aspects, and despite their considerable distance in terms of chronology, both *Germany Year Zero* and *Come and See* are films characterised by a desire to make definitive statements on the effect of war on children. This perhaps stems from the fact that, historically, they are both in a way 'final statements', Rossellini's film being the final film in his war trilogy<sup>84</sup>, Klimov's the last great war film of the Soviet era.<sup>85</sup> In both films there is a palpable sense of anger which manifests itself in a deep, pervasive pessimism over the role of children both during and after cataclysmic conflict.

*Germany Year Zero* is about shame, the shame of a population who did far too little to arrest the rise of Hitler, a nation whose youth must shoulder the burden of their fathers. The adult male in *Germany Year Zero* is weak as he is in *Come and See*

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<sup>84</sup> Rossellini would of course return to the subject of the Second World War in films such as *Era Notte a Roma* (1959) and *Il Generale Della Rovere* (1960)

<sup>85</sup> The first is generally considered to be Tarkovsky's *Ivan's Childhood*

where one of the first images is that of a disgruntled uncle attempting to rein in unruly children.

## 2.1 Challenging Deleuze and the seer in neorealism

In Deleuze's two-volume history of cinema, Italian neorealism occupies a privileged position, poised as it is between the movement image and time image. The movement image, which in Deleuze's view had dominated the cinema since its inception had reached a deep crisis during the war years, before breaking down completely during the post-war period. The movement image, with its classic SAS (Situation-Action-Situation) or ASA (Action-Situation-Action) construction - its action image, perception image and affection image form - found itself giving way to a new kind of image, the time image. Many of the strong linkages established by the movement image were now being broken down. The key mutations that take place<sup>86</sup> between these images include the fact that the image no longer refers to a totalising or synthetic situation, characters multiply and become interchangeable, the image loses its definition as either action, affection or perception (and cannot therefore be affiliated with genre) and purposeful action is replaced by an art of wandering. In this context, Deleuze briefly notes the importance of child characters in neorealism. He mentions in particular De Sica but also the later films of Truffaut. '[...] In the adult world' observes Deleuze 'the child is affected by a certain motor helplessness, but one which makes him all the more capable of seeing and hearing'<sup>87</sup>.

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<sup>86</sup> Succinctly outlined by Tom Conley in Adrian Parr (ed), *The Deleuze Dictionary* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2005) pp.174 - 175

<sup>87</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 3

The recent work of Jaimey Fisher provides useful variations on the Deleuzian model. Fisher acknowledges that ‘the child serves the transformed specular and spatial relations perfectly: it becomes an indispensable means for the film to depict a powerlessness reflecting the wider wartime and post-war social crisis while still offering a site for audience identification.’<sup>88</sup> His adoption of a psychoanalytical approach (most notably in his article ‘Who’s Watching the Rubble Kids?’) jars with the anti-Freudianism of Deleuze and Guattari:

‘I would suggest that the child is inserted into psychoanalysis’ active/passive, male/female binary as a third intermediate term that chiasmically connects male to passivity and female to activity. The child feels less at home in the world than the traditional protagonist who, in the cinematic system, more often arranges it and dominates it.’<sup>89</sup>

Throughout his writings on the subject, Fisher calls into question Deleuze’s definition of the child character as weak and passive, deeming it as a whole unsatisfactory. He argues that the representation of youth in both neorealism and DEFA films is more complex and highly contradictory. ‘Children’ Fisher observes, ‘inhabit both the core and the borders of the social order and thereby play a contradictory role in patriarchy and masculinity – that is, they represent a contradiction reflecting the paradoxical representational responsibilities of these films.’<sup>90</sup>

Fisher argues that alongside the crisis in representation, there also exists a crisis of gender in which the actions of children highlight male lack. ‘As the duel of the action image grows oblique and traditional confrontations fade’, he writes, ‘the male

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<sup>88</sup> Jaimey Fisher, ‘The Figure of the Child in Italian Neorealism and the German Rubble-Film’ in Laura E. Ruberto and Kristi M. Wilson (eds), *Italian Neorealism and Global Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press 2007), pp. 32 – 33.

<sup>89</sup> Fisher, ‘Who’s Watching the Rubble-Kids? Youth, Pedagogy and Politics in Early DEFA Films’ in *New German Critique*, No.82, East German Film (Winter 2001) pp. 91 - 125

<sup>90</sup> *ibid* p.99

protagonists begin to encounter the male child as the enemy.’ Furthermore, he continues, ‘as neither simple subject or object, neither clear ally nor enemy, the child dilutes the purer dualism of the action-image duel, effectively rendering its form opaque.’<sup>91</sup> Fisher’s nuanced modification of Deleuzian theory is undoubtedly a more effective way of reading the position of the child in neorealist cinema. However, I would suggest that the child in *Come and See* fits the mould of the seer (and hearer) far more closely, resisting Fisher’s revisionist approach in a way that the children in *Paisan* and *Germany Year Zero* do not.

## **2.2 *Paisan*: The disintegration of the male subject.**

The second of six episodes charting the Allies’ liberation of Italy in Rossellini’s *Paisan*, the Naples episode sees an encounter between a black American GI, Joe (Dots Johnson) and a young Neapolitan street urchin, Pasquale (Alfonso Bovino). In the context of both Deleuze’s writings on the cinema of the seer as well as Jaimey Fisher’s modifications of Deleuze, the episode is undoubtedly intriguing.

The episode begins with dense establishing shots of heaving machinery in the port of Naples with a voice-over informing the viewer of the city’s strategic importance in the liberation of Italy. Rossellini then moves onto street level and we see a variety of street performers plying their trade amongst the chaotic bustle – these include a fire-eater and a soldier performing somersaults. Shots of the latter serve as our first introduction to the character of Pasquale who proclaims with the air of an impresario ‘Watch how he leaps! – he could smash his head, but he doesn’t!’

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<sup>91</sup> Fisher, ‘The Figure of the Child in Italian Neorealism and the German Rubble-Film’, p.33

After exchanging a few words with some other boys, Rossellini's camera follows Pasquale as he walks, hands in pockets, down an alley. Behind him, children are leaping over one another, bakers sell pastries door-to-door. He stops to pick up the stub of a half-smoked cigarette and continues walking. In this particular shot, we see how Rossellini's young character is shown to be very much distinct from other children – he acts in an adult manner, resembling a miniature version of the brooding Jean Gabin character in French poetic realist films such as *Quai des Brumes* (1938). Fisher has argued, compellingly, that 'Pasquale does not personify, as Deleuze claims, a motor-helplessness; rather he serves as a kind of *caricature* of putative masculine agency that foregrounds the precariousness of that agency'<sup>92</sup> - a view that I would share. Fisher's outlining of the caricatural quality of Pasquale links him to Marcello and Romoletto in *Rome, Open City*, Michel in *Forbidden Games*, Ivan in *Ivan's Childhood* and Flor in *Come and See* – all characters who imitate the look and movement of their adult counterparts whilst foregrounding, as Fisher claims, the fragility of masculine agency.

Before stumbling upon the black American GI Joe, Pasquale is called over by another youngster who offers him the chance to make some money as a look-out. 'Do you want to make 150 lire?' he is asked. 'No, 200' Pasquale insists. After the boys agree on a fee, Rossellini cuts to an adjacent alley where a drunken Joe, struggling to remain upright, is being examined and haggled over by a small group of youngsters. Here, not only has the adult male been stripped of his agency, he has been relegated to no more than an object to be haggled over on the black market. In his framing of Joe, surrounded by four street youths (two either side), Rossellini

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<sup>92</sup> Fisher, 'The Figure of the Child in Neorealism and the German Rubble Film', p.38 (my italics).

emphasizes the exotic quality of the American GI, especially his impressive height. One of the youths remarks on his 'beautiful teeth'. Just when Pasquale arrives, an adult black market trader swoops and takes Joe away. However, Rossellini then cuts to Joe losing himself in a crowd of people with no sign of the trader. This passage amply demonstrates the dispersal of spatio-temporal co-ordinates outlined by Deleuze. There is no clear causal link from the alley sequence to the street scene – the trader who had 'claimed' Joe has disappeared. Out of the confusion and chaos springs Pasquale. With the camera positioned at a child's height, Rossellini presents a shot of adults packed together in the frame, their hands at waist level. Pasquale wriggles through the crowd, toward camera shouting 'Police! Police! Run!'



*Figure 1: Pasquale (Alfonso Bovino) makes his way through the adult crowd in the Naples episode of Paisan (Roberto Rossellini 1946)*

What is significant here is that, as a child character, Pasquale appears to completely defy the Deleuzian characterization of the child as passive seer. As the above shot demonstrates, he becomes wholly active – more so than the adults around him – bursting through the immobile crowd to 'claim' Joe for himself.



An interesting interpretation of the character of Joe can be found in Kaja Silverman's *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, from which Fisher draws extensively in his work on the Deleuzian shift from the movement to time image. Silverman argues that the post-war period saw a collective loss of belief in the dominant fiction of ideal masculinity, what Silverman calls 'historical trauma':

'By 'historical trauma' I mean a historically precipitated but psychoanalytically specific disruption, with ramifications extending far beyond the individual psyche. [...] I mean any historical event, whether socially engineered or of natural occurrence, which brings a large group of male subjects into such an intimate relation with lack that they are at least for the moment unable to sustain an imaginary relation with the phallus, and so withdraw their belief in dominant fiction.'<sup>93</sup>

Silverman bases her analysis on three Hollywood films of the 1940s, films which, 'adopt very different attitudes towards male castration'<sup>94</sup>: *The Best Years of Our Lives* (William Wyler 1946), *It's A Wonderful Life* (Frank Capra 1946) and *The Guilt of Janet Ames* (Henry Levin 1947). For Silverman, the male subject is no longer the man of strong, decisive action but a subject in deep crisis – a hero who no longer feels at home, having been evicted from the centre of narratives and finding that both women and children have usurped his position.

From the same period as the aforementioned Hollywood productions, Rossellini's *Paisan*, in the six individual episodes, features a variety of male subjects who suffer the same crisis, none more so than Joe in the Naples episode.

After being 'claimed' by Pasquale, Joe is dragged away, across a heaving street and into a small theatre which is showing a puppet show. The castration of the adult male is highlighted by the implausibility of a young boy being physically able to control the movements of a robust soldier. It is the child therefore who holds the power in

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<sup>93</sup> Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (London: Routledge 1992) p. 55

<sup>94</sup> *ibid* p.53

the relationship, the male relinquishing the reins to the child with the traditional roles reversed. However, both characters are ultimately drifting without clear aim or destination.

Pasquale drags Joe to the theatre, back out into the streets, to an area of rubble and a large mound of bricks and tin cans. Rossellini's camera is never over-eager – it is observant, never tracking toward its subject but allowing the subject time to enter the centre of the frame - such as the shot of the corner of a barren, war-scarred street in which we see Pasquale and Joe stumbling toward the camera. A tired Joe stops at the corner of the pavement whilst Pasquale tugs at his jacket, only managing to get him moving again after playing a few notes on his harmonica.

An interesting question arises here. Where exactly does Pasquale want to take Joe? Does he simply want someone to play with? It is the combination of his drunkenness, passivity and 'exotic' quality (African-American) that attracts Pasquale and allows him to lead Joe away. Also, as I have discussed, the fact that he is a child, and has none of the prejudice that might be present in an adult allows him to quickly befriend Joe. The latter's ethnicity is for Rossellini, undoubtedly of significance. The fact that he is black and not white leads to the assumption that he, like Pasquale, is a marginalised figure. This 'pseudo-couple'<sup>95</sup> have in common a life of grinding poverty. As we will see later in the episode, when Joe is sober he is very different, both reclaiming power and exerting his authority, but in this first part of the episode, leading up to the exchange of dialogue on the mound of rubble and in a state of inebriation, it would appear that Pasquale retains slight dominance in their

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<sup>95</sup> A Beckettian term used with reference to father and son Antonio and Bruno in *Bicycle Thieves* (Vittorio De Sica 1948) by Robert Gordon in his paper entitled 'Re-visiting Bicycle Thieves' at the conference, 'Re-envisioning the child in Italian Film', July 2008.

relationship.<sup>96</sup> What gives the young boy power, what maintains his hold on Joe is his harmonica – in a highly symbolic reversal, the child becomes the pied-piper. In his playing of a few notes, Pasquale stirs Joe from his drunken state. The GI now attempts to try and reclaim the dominant position – as outlined by Silverman. He is spurred on by the fact that the young Neapolitan is attempting to usurp his position, mocking him, by playing an instrument which he feels is *his*, a symbol of his country and heritage.<sup>97</sup> As Jaimey Fisher has observed, the actions of children in neorealism ‘mock and literally threaten the paternal male agents in the films. The actions of children, like the actions of women, highlight male lack.’<sup>98</sup>

The following sequence conforms to Deleuze’s writings on the fragmentary nature of the early time-image as inaugurated by neorealism. In narrative terms, they delineate Joe’s stumbling after Pasquale across a rubble-strewn landscape. However, Rossellini does not utilise conventional shot-reverse-shot schemata. As earlier in the episode, individual shots of the characters do not appear to have any clear relationship with each other, appearing disjointed. A shot of a hunched Joe, stumbling toward a destroyed building are followed by a shot of Pasquale planted deep in rubble. Joe at one point stops and stares into the distance - though not

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<sup>96</sup> In a fascinating interview conducted by Pasquale Iaccio with actor Alfonso Bovino in September 1997, the latter recalls his experience of filming the Naples episode. ‘I had no script, nothing at all [...] Rossellini told me exactly what to do’. What is particularly interesting is Bovino’s repetition of ‘spontaneous’ throughout the interview, transcribed in all its dialectical colour. ‘Lo scugnizzo di Paisà tra passato e presente: Intervista ad Alfonso Bovino’ in Pasquale Iaccio (ed) , *Rossellini: Dal neorealismo alla diffusione alla conoscenza* (Napoli: Liguori 2006) pp.44 – 47.

<sup>97</sup> In his work on the history of the Harmonica, Kim Field observes that ‘the supremacy of the common people is the favourite theme of American folklore, and our instrument – the harmonica – has become enshrined in myth along with us. As we tame the frontier, the mouth organ is along for the ride.’ Kim Field, *Harmonicas, Harps and Heavy Breathers: The Evolution of the People’s Instrument* (New York: Fireside 1993) p.33

<sup>98</sup> Jaimey Fisher, ‘Deleuze in a Ruinous Context’ in *Iris* 23: Spring 1997 (Special Issue entitled *Gilles Deleuze: Philosopher of the Cinema*) p.68

specifically at Pasquale. As Fisher points out, the staring at rubble ‘drives home the disintegration of the male subject.’<sup>99</sup>

As he cheerfully pulls on an over-sized jacket he has found, Pasquale blows and draws on the harmonica, appearing to mock Joe – again he is very much a caricature of male agency but as an image, it is iconic: as iconic as any of the defining images of neorealism or any film examining childhood experience of the Second World War. It is a shot which emphasises both the child’s youth and his (premature) shouldering of adult responsibilities. In a medium long-shot, the figure of Pasquale is surrounded, fully embedded in the rubble but he is nonetheless playful. The young boy then emerges atop a pile of rubble and tin cans and Joe clambers up to join him. The latter - in Silvermanian terms, eager to reclaim dominance - takes Pasquale’s harmonica, declaring ‘I’ll show you how to play this thing like a maestro’ but he blows into the wrong end. This is the beginning of an extraordinary exchange between the characters in which the roles of adult and child are reversed atop a very physical reminder of the devastation of the war. It would appear that old power and relationship dynamics are void and have to be reconstructed

Pasquale now appears like a parent listening intently to their child’s first words as he listens to Joe’s flights of fancy. The GI begins singing the Negro spiritual ‘Nobody Knows The Troubles I’ve Seen’ – like his reclaiming of the harmonica, it is an attempt to reassert his dominance - but again, Pasquale is dismissive and with a flick under his chin, he says ‘You sang well but I didn’t like the song at all’.

One feature of this sequence which has been neglected is its humour, an element which Rossellini foregrounds in this episode perhaps more than any other in *Paisan*.

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<sup>99</sup> *ibid* p.68

Rossellini wrings humour from the characters' immense differences, from their inability to communicate effectively. As Joe pretends to fly, acting out the sounds of morse code, Pasquale says 'Are you stupid?' When Joe extends his arms, the boy exclaims 'A plane! A plane!' which he then, oblivious to Joe, qualifies with 'they've smashed everything and they'll continue smashing everything' – delivered with a very 'adult' weariness.

Joe imagines an opulent feast which will be laid out for him upon his return home 'because I'm a hero' – 'Caviar! Chicken! Turkeys! Whiskey! Beer! Champagne! – all for me!' he says to the amusement of Pasquale. The dialogue here, this evocation of an abundance of food and drink contrasts in tragic-comic fashion with the characters' desolate surroundings. After chanting 'I'm going home, going home', Joe himself punctures his own dream, 'I don't want to go home, my home is an old shack' and he slumps backward, 'let me sleep'. Pasquale whispers 'Joe, if you fall asleep, I'll steal your shoes.' Once again, we have the child here threatening the adult male, warning him that he will take advantage of any moment of weakness. I would very much agree with Fisher when he observes that this generational overthrow is more an action-image overthrow than an Oedipal one – the child has no qualms in exploiting the crisis of the male subject and taking his place as the driving force of the action image.

The following scene takes place some time later. We see a sober Joe driving through Naples in his MP jeep. Gone is the passivity of the previous scenes – Joe here appears powerful and highly active: a man at work. Rossellini cuts to the vehicle in front and we see it is a truck transporting crates of goods. It is revealed that Pasquale is busy in the back, attempting to steal some of the load. Once again we

have a shot of the young boy dwarfed by his surroundings (in this scene, by tall stacks of cases). Joe spots the boy but is initially unaware of his identity. The truck is stopped and Joe removes the boy, ‘Why you steal huh? Joe asks, roughly searching Pasquale’s pockets, ‘I wouldn’t be surprised to find a battleship in here’. The boy attempts to bribe him with cigarettes but Joe finds the harmonica and suddenly realises who the young boy is - and that he stole his shoes. Pasquale tells him ‘I told you not to fall asleep!’



Figure 2: American GI, Joe (Dots Johnson) encounters Pasquale for the second time in *Paisan*.

Joe here is much more assertive, powerfully reclaiming his dominant position as he pulls off Pasquale’s various (stolen) layers of clothing. Rossellini’s framing and composition emphasises this reassertion of power on the part of the male subject. Joe is as upright and forceful in his sobriety as he was stumbling and passive in his drunkenness. The shots are edited in a much more conventional ‘action-image’ fashion – the action is more purposeful as Joe grabs Pasquale – lifting him almost off his feet. This demonstration of the adult’s physical power covered in low-angle shots

draw attention to the differences in size between the characters. In terms of movement and shot composition, attention is drawn to verticality - to hierarchy - rather than the horizontal, rhizomatic trajectory of the first segment.

Attention is drawn again to Joe's imposing frame. This had already been seen in the drunken scenes but in those sequences Joe was either hunched, stumbling or sitting. The boy then runs away but Joe catches up with him - a reversal of the drunken scene. Enraged by Pasquale's thieving, Joe lifts him by his lapels and into his jeep, driving him away. This second of the episode's three main segments, with its brusque return to 'dominant fiction', retrospectively imparts an almost oneiric quality to the first half of the episode, could it have been a drunken dream?

The third and final segment of the episode has been described by Sandro Bernardi as having 'all the characteristics of a *nekya* – a descent to the underworld, [its use of landscape] may be taken as a symbol of all Rossellini's landscapes.'<sup>100</sup> The scene is, I would argue, a prime example of how, as Bernardi observes, 'from a barely-sketched depiction of the world, [*Paisan*] continually moves to a vision of people without a world.'<sup>101</sup>

The episode ends in a dramatic vision and, crucially, it is Joe that becomes the Deleuzian seer, Joe that suffers crippling motor-helplessness. The soldier drives Pasquale to his 'home' which turns out to be the enormous Mergellina caves housing the city's homeless and displaced. After Pasquale's dominance in the first part of the episode and Joe's reclaiming of dominance in the second, in this third and final part,

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<sup>100</sup> Sandro Bernardi, 'Rossellini's Landscapes: Nature, Myth, History' in David Forgacs, Sarah Lutton and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (eds), *Rossellini: Magician of the Real* (London: BFI Publishing 2000) p.52 Landscape in Paisà will be explored more fully in the following chapter.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid* p.52

Rossellini delineates both characters' ultimate helplessness. In a sense, I would argue that being the adult character and having reasserted his dominance, it is Joe that suffers the greatest helplessness. His reaction to what he *sees* is one of confusion, as a character he can only *see* - he cannot react, he cannot change or impose himself upon the situation. Pasquale is in this scene, also at his most helpless, his most child-like, gone are the aggressively adult mannerisms of the first part. He looks upwards at Joe for guidance, shuffling around him to follow his gaze. After realising the scale of the disaster, Joe returns to his jeep and drives away. As an adult male character, Joe, by quickly abandoning Pasquale and failing to even try to rectify the child's situation is certainly a failure as a movement-image protagonist, but an exemplar of the Deleuzian seer. The levelling of any potential hierarchy between characters is caused by a vision of catastrophe – it is almost as if both characters have become children, and paradoxically it is Joe who, in the most child-like of responses, flees.

### **2.3 *Germany Year Zero*: Oscillating between passivity and activity.**

Following the opening tracking shots of a devastated Berlin, the protagonist in Rossellini's *Germany Year Zero* is introduced at a graveyard. Whilst the adults around him are busy digging, we see 13 year-old Edmund Kohler (Edmund Moeschke) only pretending to dig. The adults around him are deeply hostile and he is eventually forced away. Rossellini's camera follows Edmund as he comes across a small crowd gathered around the carcass of a dead horse. Edmund watches as one man cuts away at the horse's leg. In a meticulously composed shot, Rossellini



presents three planes of action/attention: the carcass, the crowd and, behind them, the burnt out, skeletal landscape of Berlin.

These opening moments fit effectively into the Deleuzian characterisation of the nascent time-image. Edmund's stroll, again, is an 'urban voyage [...] detached from the active and affective structure which supported it, directed it, gave it even vague directions.'<sup>102</sup> The viewer watches the character see, learns hand-in-hand with the protagonist who finds himself on the margins of the pro-filmic unable to change or affect it. Jaimey Fisher has observed of these scenes that:

'Edmund [...] is active in the opening sequences, but in a decidedly morbid way: he's digging graves, trying to get a shank of meat from a dead horse on the street, and collecting coal dropped by a truck, all in futile efforts to provide for his family. The actions are over-determined by the situation and cannot effectively modify it.'<sup>103</sup>

Yet, as my description suggests, Edmund is not as active to the extent that Fisher claims. The young protagonist is not physically digging but 'playing' at digging, his efforts are half-hearted, fruitless. Whilst he does approach the carcass, he does not attempt, in any forceful way, to grab some meat. Only with the stray pieces of coal is Edmund really active but again, he is chased away by adults.

Upon his return to the family home, Edmund is faced with the tyrannical figure of Herr Rademacher (Hans Sengen), a family neighbour who launches a brutal tirade on Edmund's seriously-ill father whom he sees as a strain on the local families' already meagre resources. Rademacher is one of two adult male characters in *Germany Year Zero* - along with the character of the pederastic schoolteacher Enning – who are shown to manipulate Edmund, demanding adult action from the young boy whilst ruthlessly chastising him when his efforts (understandably) fall short.

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<sup>102</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema I*, p.212

<sup>103</sup> Jaimey Fisher, 'Deleuze in a Ruinous Context', p.68

Rademacher calls Edmund's ailing father, 'an old [Egyptian] mummy', warning that 'if he doesn't die soon, I'll liquidate him' – the film's first expressions of murderous intent toward Herr Kohler. Edmund is shocked, held back from retaliating by his older sister Eva (Ingetraud Hinze).

Whilst in his dealings with those outwith his family, Edmund is rendered passive, within the family sphere, he is, paradoxically, the most active element, shouldering adult responsibility without complaint. Rossellini effectively highlights this point through the introduction of the Kohler family. In the family's small room, Herr Kohler lies in bed and Edmund's older brother Karl-Heinz (Franz Otto Krüger) sits hunched, in hiding and afraid of reporting to the authorities. Amidst these 'castrated' adult males, Edmund is highly active. When Karl-Heinz says he will give himself up, his younger brother forcefully dissuades him, reassuring him he will get another job. This exchange only serves to drive home the impotence of the elder brother. François Truffaut observed that *Germany Year Zero* is the first film in which 'a child is shown to be more serious than the adults surrounding him'<sup>104</sup> and this sequence perfectly captures this. However, the fact remains that Edmund is still a child, a child seemingly blocked, oscillating, as Fisher has written, between passivity and activity.

As we have seen, most of the adult (male) figures in *Germany Year Zero* are either themselves crippled by helplessness (the adults in his family) or are deeply suspicious and hostile to Edmund (the adults outwith the family), keeping him firmly on the margins. To compound the young protagonist's alienation, even other children prove hostile. Out wandering again, Edmund comes across a group of children playing around a grand but dried up fountain. Unable to join in, he merely *watches*

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<sup>104</sup> [L'enfant est] montré plus grave que les adultes qui sont autour de lui', François Truffaut quoted in Vallet, *L'image de l'enfant au cinéma*, p.65

them. In this sequence, as with several moments in the film, the camera appears to capture Edmund's thought, it seems almost as if, not only does he fear rejection from the children, he also feels that childhood play<sup>105</sup> is perhaps a waste of precious time that could be spent working, searching out provisions. Rossellini's camera movement and editing is particularly effective in this respect. Initially, the camera tracks slowly alongside Edmund as he walks right to left, watching the children play. In the top left corner of the frame, the prowling figure of Enning, the Nazi schoolteacher, makes its way around the fountain and Rossellini cuts to a two-shot. Camera movement and framing all serve to foreground the fact that Rossellini's young character remains blocked between the worlds of adult and childhood, never fully belonging to, or embraced by either. Through the introduction of Enning, the film's most malevolent character, Edmund's alienation from childhood is compounded. Throughout *Germany Year Zero*, moments of normal childhood activity prove to be inaccessible to Edmund. As the boy and the schoolteacher converse, behind them, the children are shown to run breathlessly around the fountain.

The schoolteacher will prove to be an influence both on Edmund's parricide and the young boy's subsequent suicide. These links between Enning and death (associated in turn with Nazism) are elaborated during this first meeting, the schoolteacher appearing almost vampiric in his caressing of Edmund's neck.

Edmund and Enning take a tram across town and arrive at another devastated area where the schoolteacher meets an old acquaintance busy clearing rubble. As the two adults converse, Edmund stands behind them. This shot is composed in a similar fashion to the first meeting between Edmund and Enning at the fountain. Edmund is

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<sup>105</sup> To be examined more fully in my chapter on Play.

now in the background, framed between the two adults, and glances around him at the devastation and civilians digging. Taken together, these two scenes continue to support Fisher's argument that in *Germany Year Zero*, Edmund oscillates between activity and passivity, foreground and background. After taking the young boy back to what appears to be an opulent hideaway for Nazi officials fearing reprisals, Enning orders the boy to sell a record of Hitler speeches. With this act, Enning irrevocably contaminates the impressionable boy, who, just as he yearned to belong to childhood seconds earlier, now accepts the schoolteacher's initiatory task in an attempt to prove worthy of adulthood.

Having met some prospective buyers, Edmund plays them Enning's record. Rossellini layers this sound over spatially dislocated shots of a skeletal Berlin. The most effective of these is a low, wide-angle shot of the inside of a vast, bombed-out government building in which a man and a young child are walking toward camera, almost in a daze, the Fuhrer's bark chillingly reverberating. As Jose-Luis Guarner has observed, this sequence, with its symbiotic relationship between sound and image, has a distinct hallucinatory quality. It is a quality which is also present (albeit in more technically accomplished form) in *Come and See* where the presence of Nazism - a Nazism which is of course more 'alive' than in *Germany Year Zero* - is relayed primarily through sound until its appearance in the film's apocalyptic final third.

In examining the patterns of behaviour of Edmund and Flor in Klimov's *Come and See*, one crucial difference is immediately clear. Whilst Flor can be said to move from activity to passivity, Edmund appears to take the opposite trajectory: from passivity to activity. Of course, as I have shown, Edmund oscillates between both

states, but he becomes predominantly active in the second part of the film in which he poisons his father and then, consumed with guilt, commits suicide.

Despite his gradual movement away from the passivity of the Deleuzian seer, Edmund is still shown to record, to absorb. In the final part of the film, Edmund himself provides comparatively little dialogue. Instead he soaks up that of others, predominantly that of Enning and his father. Most of this dialogue is, on the one hand, mired in despondency and regret (Herr Kohler) and, on the other, fuelled by the murderous drive to eliminate the weak (Enning).

After asking Enning for help with his ailing father, the schoolteacher replies 'If he dies, he dies [...] Would you rather die yourself and let an old man live? [...] You must have the courage to sacrifice the weak.' With this sequence and the following scene in which Edmund, his head still swimming with the unpalatable guidance of Enning, visits his father in hospital, Rossellini shows how the impressionable Edmund, striving to please the adults around him, is lead ineluctably to his act of parricide. 'It would be better if I die' admits Herr Kohler, 'I even considered killing myself but I don't have the courage'. As Edmund sits quietly, his father's words merge with those of Enning, all leading the young boy to one solution. Indeed, as his father utters the last sentence, Rossellini cuts to a shot of Edmund holding what appears to be a bottle of poison. 'I'm dragging this life' continues Herr Kohler, a telling expression, linking back to the film's earlier images of death (the horse carcass) and reinforcing a sense of weakness.

Upon Herr Kohler's return to the family home, Edmund continues to record and absorb his father's desperate lament. 'I watch your misery without being able to help', he continues, 'Why am I condemned to live.' These two lines are of particular

importance. Here, Herr Kohler admits to his own motor-helplessness, the fact that he is only able to look on as his family suffers. He is also ‘condemned to life’ rather than death: life is a condemnation with death presumably now the only release. Lying in his bed, flanked by his older children, he begins a long, painful speech on the misery of the war during which Edmund prepares him some tea. Edmund here, having been forced to hear the advice of Enning, the laments of his father as well as the relentless hostility of Rademacher, has his father’s life in his hands and decides to act in an attempt to placate all of them. Seknadje-Askenazi makes an interesting observation regarding what he views as the shared destiny of father and son:

‘One could say that the destinies of Edmund and his father are linked [...] In the scene during which the latter drinks poisoned tea, does one not have the impression that the former is drinking it too [...]’?<sup>106</sup>

Just as Edmund oscillates between passivity and activity (childhood and adulthood), his father occupies a similarly liminal position between life and death. ‘He is neither living or dead’ Seknadje-Askenazi argues, ‘he is alive and dead at the same time. He has death in his soul.’<sup>107</sup> This link between father and son is cemented in the film’s final scenes in which Edmund, swelling with guilt, once again takes to the streets. Cruelly chastised by Enning and rejected by a group of children, he enters a bombed-out building opposite his family’s block, climbing up several floors. He watches as his family emerges from across the street - both Eva and Karl Heinz are dressed in funereal black. Completely alienated, the child is shown to withdraw from the world. In one way, Edmund here returns to the status of Deleuzian seer, engaged in aimless, fruitless action (pretending to shoot his own shadow on the floor) but in another, I

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<sup>106</sup> ‘On peut considérer que les destins d’Edmund et son père sont liés [...] Dans la scène où celui-ci boit le thé empoisonné, n’a-t-on pas l’impression que celui-là le boit en même temps [...]’?, Seknadje-Askenazi, p. 191

<sup>107</sup> ‘[Il est] ni vivant ni mort, à la fois vivant et mort. Il a la mort dans l’âme’, idid, p.191

would suggest that whilst Rossellini's protagonist certainly is estranged from the world, he is no longer the observer from the margins, he has lost interest in diegetic events, withdrawing completely into his own guilt and anger.

## **2.4 The 'inter-seer': Movement of the world to Movement of the Mind**

In the four decades between Rossellini's *Paisan* and *Germany Year Zero* and Klimov's *Come and See*, what happens to the figure of the child in the war film in terms of the Deleuzian seer, in terms of passivity/activity, in terms of the child as witness? What unites the three 'inter-seer' films – *Forbidden Games*, *Ivan's Childhood* and *Diamonds of the Night* – is a greater interest in character psychology, an interest which is in keeping with the general development of art cinema in the post-war period. In the seer films, the child character finds him/herself swept up by events, suffering motor-helplessness and is left only to record, to absorb. In the inter-seer films there is a greater interest in the way in which external events impact on the child's mental processes. Through flashback and dream sequences, the films' structures meld with the traumatised consciousness of the characters. If the Deleuzian 'movement of the world' is accentuated in the seer films, in these inter-seer works, the emphasis is more on what might be called the movement of the mind.

Clément's *Forbidden Games*, as I have already outlined, is the most classically-structured of the six films in my corpus, with the bal(l)ade structure of Rossellini replaced by a relatively conventional narrative framework. What distinguishes the child in *Forbidden Games* from the others in my corpus is that not only is she female, she is also the youngest of the eight principal child characters. Her very

young age should make her an ideal Deleuzian seer and, indeed, early in the film she comes close to such. However, as the film progresses, it is clear that a Deleuzian approach is less useful than one informed by psychoanalysis.

Because of their surroundings but also because of their ages, Pasquale, Edmund and Flor cannot withdraw: for them there is no refuge from the movement of the world. Although they too find difficulty negotiating external events, Paulette and Michel are able to create an alternate world, one which they *can* effectively control. There is an argument for Paulette being the most active child character of the group, and this despite her very young age. Rather than being swept up by external events, she becomes the director of her own drama. Paulette, together with Michel, becomes highly active in a way which the seers are not. As adolescents, the latter characters occupy a liminal position between the world of childhood and adulthood which the five year-old Paulette clearly has not yet reached.

With *Ivan's Childhood* and *Diamonds of the Night*, the focus is - as with *Forbidden Games* - on character psychology. However, unlike Clément's film, the child's fragile mental state is reflected in the films' non-linear structures. There is certainly a withdrawal of some kind but it is not a physical one and it is certainly not as sustained as that by Paulette and Michel. In these films the child engages in a tug-of-war with the movement of the world and this is reflected in the distortion and distension of narrative recently outlined by Lury in *The Child in Film*.

As with Paulette and Michel, Tarkovsky's Ivan is far from being a Deleuzian seer, the latter modifications by Miller and Fisher notwithstanding. While Clément's characters create their own world, Ivan struggles aggressively to become part of the adult world. The adults surrounding Ivan initially show concern for him but once it



becomes clear that the boy's anger cannot be assuaged, it is decided that it is best channeled against the enemy. As in *Germany Year Zero*, the adults, instead of sheltering Ivan from outside events, are quick to exploit his resourcefulness.

*Ivan's Childhood* and *Diamonds of the Night* are the only two films in my corpus to unfold in multiple spatio-temporal realms. In *The Child in Film*, Lury notes that:

‘[...] interweaving temporalities and ellipses provide a framework riddled with gaps and inconsistencies which represent the child's experience [...] In *Ivan's Childhood*, the recurring visual motif of the cobweb, a fractured series of circles at which Ivan appears at the centre, implies the paradoxical strength, real fragility and incompleteness of the child's perception.’<sup>108</sup>



Figure 3: Ivan (Nikolai Burlyayev) is viewed through a spider's web in the opening dream sequence of *Ivan's Childhood* (Andrei Tarkovsky 1962)

These structural gaps and inconsistencies are opposed to the distended bal(l)ades of Rossellini and Klimov and the linear, classical construction of *Forbidden Games*. As I will discuss in following chapters, although *Ivan's Childhood* and *Diamonds of the Night* are both modernist in structure, with Nemec's film there is the beginning of a return toward the Deleuzian bal(l)ade. The film appears poised between the

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<sup>108</sup> Lury, p.114

multiple temporalities of Tarkovsky and the bal(l)ade form which will reappear in *Come and See*. As well as its structure, *Diamonds of the Night* appears much closer to *Come and See* in terms of its relation to the Deleuzian seer. Although the two young fugitives are ostensibly active as they escape into the forest, their actions are ultimately fruitless as they are easily re-captured by the elderly Home Guard. Just as the bridge in *Forbidden Games* signals a shift away from the Rossellinian seer, the final passage of *Diamonds of the Night* - in which the boys are forced to watch their captors gorge on food and drink - serves as an effective figural bridge into the Klimovian seer. Punctured by quasi-subliminal flashbacks, the scene is filtered largely through the sensory experience of the exhausted, hungry Manny.<sup>109</sup>

## 2.5 *Come and See* : The Return to the Deleuzian seer (and hearer)

My eye for me is a certain power of making contact with things,  
and not a screen on which they are projected.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*

Whilst there have been considerable interventions on the Deleuzian interpretations of Rossellini's work there have been comparatively few on Klimov's *Come and See*, apart from the work of Tyrus Miller. This is perhaps due to the fact that chronologically, the Soviet film comes much later and is therefore not easily assimilated into the immediately post-war schema of the cinema of the seer: Deleuze himself inserts few post-neorealist works into his argument.

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<sup>109</sup> As Lury writes, also in common with Klimov's film, *Diamonds of the Night* ends with the characters retreating into the forest. 'The effect of these endings is to refuse closure, to allow the child and viewer to remain suspended in the narrative [...]', *The Child in Film*, p.136

I would suggest that, after four decades of technical advancement, *Come and See* is not only the ultimate and fullest expression of the child as seer - the child as pure witness - but that the film is also an extreme manifestation of the Zavattinian theory of 'pedinamento': the steadicam - used extensively in the film - is, after all, highly suited to a 'shadowing' of characters. The implication in Zavattini's 'shadowing' is that camera is subservient to character, that is to say, movement of camera is dictated by movement of character. In *Come and See*, there appears to be a far more complex configuration. While the camera is subservient to character, the character is subservient to the movement of the world. Therefore, although the camera appears aggressive in its unrelenting pursuit of Flor, it - like Flor - is actually being 'inhaled by the world'. Whereas in *Paisan* and *Germany Year Zero*, events take place *after* the catastrophe of war, in *Come and See*, the protagonist (and the viewer) is drawn irrevocably toward final catastrophe. The temporal location of the child's witnessing is different: in Rossellini's two works, the war has passed and the child is forced to deal with this aftermath; in Klimov's film the war is very much ongoing. In both cases, however, it is clear that, as Deleuze observes, characters no longer know how to react to the situation that confronts them.

Aside from its use of widescreen and stereo, another important aesthetic difference between Rossellini's films and *Come and See* is the latter's use of subjective camera and sound. In discussing Klimov's film, therefore, the theoretical interventions of Pier Paolo Pasolini, Bruce Kawin and John Orr prove valuable supplements to Deleuzian theory.

Mindscreen, the theory of first-person film elaborated by Bruce Kawin in 1978 predates Deleuze's diptych on Cinema by four years and comes over a decade after Pier Paolo Pasolini's theory of 'free indirect discourse', the cinema of poetry. Kawin argues that 'there are two ways of using the subjective camera: to show what the character sees and to show what the character thinks. The first mode is that of the physical eye, the second that of the mind's eye.' Kawin notes that these modes can overlap 'in many surrealist and expressionist sequences' and in *Come and See* (as well as in other films in my corpus) this is often the case. Kawin's observations regarding subjective sound with the filmmaker 'allowing the audience to share his [character's] ears' as well as his eyes is particularly apposite for *Come and See*. In *Contemporary Cinema*, John Orr modifies Kawinian theory somewhat by suggesting that mindscreen is by its nature fluid [...] a fusion of 'sightscreen' and 'soundscreen' and therefore it is frequently difficult to separate the physical and mind's eye.

These interventions are undoubtedly useful, but essentially, more than any of the characters in my corpus, Flor is the archetypal Deleuzian seer. If Deleuze's schemata might be problematic in relation to the neorealist characters, it is surely incontestable in relation to *Come and See*. Not only is the character of Flor a *seer*, he is also a *hearer*. At the beginning of the film, he appears to conform to Jaimey Fisher's caricature of masculine agency in Rossellini. The character is closer to Pasquale than Edmund in this respect, their respective bal(l)ades sharing many similarities despite differences in duration and intensity. Both characters begin as caricatures of masculine agency and both end their journeys in a state of helplessness.

The multifarious aspects of the opening sequence of *Come and See* will be explored throughout my individual chapters but for the purposes of the current discussion, I will focus on its representation of the child as a challenge or threat to the adult male. This opening passage comes before the child's full impact with the horrors of war and sees him playfully mocking adult agency. In terms of child-adult relations, it conforms to scenes in the neorealist films as well as the writings of Fisher. Responding to his uncle's calls, Flor's cousin acts out a caricature of a Nazi soldier, brought to life as a growling, ghoulish creature. Flor (Alexei Kravchenko) laughs uncontrollably at his cousin who - like Pasquale in Rossellini's film - is dressed in an oversized soldier's jacket. The boys not only flaunt adult control here, they also mock the figure of the occupying German soldier. Flor's cousin welds the image of the soldier with that of his uncle into one tyrannical figure, a caricature which is paradoxically both shattered and brought viscerally to life in the film's climactic massacre. 'You laughing?' the cousin barks in a menacing growl 'you won't be laughing for long [...] the good times are over' he warns as he marches toward the camera, Flor laughing hysterically off-screen.



Figure 4: Flor's cousin growling back at him in the opening beach sequence of *Come and See* (Elem Klimov 1985)

After their uncle has trundled away in his horse and cart, the boys begin digging, actions recalling similar images in *Germany Year Zero* and *Forbidden Games*.<sup>110</sup> Already in these early minutes, Klimov shows the child testing, pushing and straining the limits of his own strength. Flor's physical exertions, his breathlessness is foregrounded on the soundtrack as Klimov's camera moves upward from the hole he is digging, then tracks to the right where the boy's cousin is engaged in similar activity, using a discarded decal helmet to scoop out sand. Flor is then shown laying face down in a hole he has dug, tugging furiously at an object buried deep in the sand. Initially, Flor's straining amuses his cousin but it soon becomes so vigorous that the boy cautiously moves back. Klimov captures his protagonist's exertions in medium close-up.

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<sup>110</sup> The representation of landscape and that of childhood play in this sequence will be examined in later chapters.



Figure 5: Flor strains to pull a rifle buried deep in the sand in the opening sequence of *Come and See*.

The image here is of the child almost as archaeologist, sifting through the remains, the discarded artifacts of the ‘extinct’ adult male. Here, the children – to go back to the writings of Silverman and Fisher – pick at the ruins of masculinity.

Flor finally manages to pull a rifle from the sand and this safely secures his passage to adulthood and life with the partisans. In the following scene Klimov shows how the boy is overly keen to join the adult world, an attitude unique in my corpus of films save perhaps for Pasquale in *Paisan* or indeed Ivan in *Ivan’s Childhood*<sup>111</sup>. Flor’s eagerness, his wide-eyed naiveté, his playfulness but also his strength and determination is highlighted in these initial scenes. He has shrugged off the passivity of childhood and is ready to embrace life as an active member of the partisans.

Although, I have argued that *Come and See* shares the bal(l)ade structure of the neorealist films<sup>112</sup>, events depicted in the opening scenes (those leading up to Flor’s arrival at the partisan camp) might be seen to adhere to the ‘undisturbed stage’ of

<sup>111</sup> Although Pasquale’s shouldering of adult responsibility is premature and somewhat involuntary, he nonetheless appears to revel in it, especially early on in the episode.

<sup>112</sup> James Chapman too, has commented on *Come and See*’s narrative structure, suggesting quite rightly that the film is ‘almost shapeless: it is episodic and picaresque with a loose structure and no sense of closure’, Chapman, *War and Film* (London: Reaktion Books 2008), p. 104

Classic Hollywood's traditional narrative structure.<sup>113</sup> After this opening, the narrative becomes unmoored, losing the tight causality of Hollywood and dilating into the bal(l)ade form. It must be noted that even if the scenes are indeed reminiscent of the undisturbed stage, Klimov infuses them with a palpable sense of unease. Just as he prepares himself to enter adulthood, the world around Klimov's protagonist chugs ominously into motion.

Flor's first impact with the reality of war is a dizzying one. Arriving at a partisan encampment in the forest, the steadicam follows him from behind as he approaches a medical tent. A nurse emerges, wearing gloves and holding a container: she waves Flor on - 'Just keep going lad, keep going.'<sup>114</sup> Whilst there might be few sights to concern Flor, the entire violence of the sequence is rendered through sound. Sounds of groaning and wailing can be heard emanating from the tent, followed by cries of 'Why rip it off with the skin? What are you doing? I'm still alive!' Flor is spared the full horror of conflict (for now) but the sequence is crucial because it highlights the importance Klimov places on sound to render the experience of war: Flor (and the viewer) can only guess at the injuries being treated in the tent.

The boy is fully embraced, seduced, by the adult world. Klimov immerses his character in an environment which - though chaotic - is nonetheless vital and invigorating. The stereo soundtrack is peppered with voices, mechanic rumblings, crackling and music from radios: sounds leap from every corner of the frame. Vicky Lebeau, in her discussion of the film-going child in the silent period, talks of a child who 'in that telling indistinction between mouth and eyes, *drinks* the image, greedily

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<sup>113</sup> As outlined by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson amongst others.

<sup>114</sup> The nurse's waving on of Flor is reminiscent of an early scene in Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979) in which after landing amidst the chaos of a Vietnamese shore, Captain Willard (Martin Sheen), rendered dazed by the initial impact, is told to move on by the director of a small TV crew (played by Coppola himself). 'Keep moving, like you're fighting' he shouts at a bemused Willard.



consuming – taking inside, incorporating’<sup>115</sup> and this could be said of Flor in these early moments at the partisan camp. But Flor’s ‘drinking, taking inside, incorporating’ of the world around him is, of course, tragically short-lived.

The broad canvas of *Come and See* - its scope – would appear to be closer to that of *Apocalypse Now* than the comparatively restrained films of Rossellini. Indeed both in terms of narrative structure but also in its lead character<sup>116</sup>, there are many similarities with Coppola’s film. Chapman’s observations on the film’s structure links it closely to *Come and See*:

‘[...] The unstructured narrative can be seen as a means of representing the confusion and chaos of a war that lacks a clear sense of moral purpose. Willard’s journey up river meanders from one incident to the next: it is a series of unconnected episodes rather than a linear progression.’<sup>117</sup>

In a 2004 article on the work of Klimov, John Wrathall describes *Apocalypse Now* and *Come and See* as the greatest war films of their era but that in Klimov’s film, ‘the apocalypse isn’t rooted in the imagination of the artist, inspired by great works of literature; it’s an apocalypse rooted firmly in the real’<sup>118</sup>.

After watching the partisans leave without him, Flor is left completely distraught - the feeling of crushing anti-climax leaving him in tears. On his arrival at the camp, he had felt embraced by the world of adults, now he finds himself completely alienated and the sneering of Glasha - the camp prostitute who is not much older than Flor himself – compounds his feeling of disillusionment. Glasha laughs at Flor’s naiveté, telling him that the partisans took pity on him by leaving him behind.

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<sup>115</sup> Vicky Lebeau, *Childhood and Cinema* (London: Reaktion Books 2008) p.49 (Lebeau’s italics)

<sup>116</sup> Harvey Keitel, Coppola’s original choice for the role of Willard, was fired because Coppola felt his portrayal was overly heroic. The role called for a certain degree of passivity which, though unusual for a Hollywood protagonist, links Willard to Flor. John Wrathall confirms this link when he observes that ‘by Hollywood standards, Flor is a very passive protagonist’, Wrathall, ‘Excursion into Hell, *Sight and Sound* (Volume 14, Issue 2, February 2004), p.29

<sup>117</sup> Chapman, p.166

<sup>118</sup> Wrathall, p.29

The forest bombing sequence is a crucial turning point for Flor and in turn the film as a whole, marking as it does the first full visceral confrontation with warfare. Diving for cover, both Flor and Glasha exit the frame as the bombs hit. Relentlessly loud explosions rip through trees and explode barns. As the bombs continue to fall, a piercing ringing sound starts to bleed onto the soundscape. The camera tracks horizontally as more explosions shatter the forest. As the bombing ends, the ringing is coupled with the sound of heavy breathing - both sounds soak into the frame whilst their source remains outside it. The source is then revealed when the camera lowers to frame a dazed Flor in frontal, medium close-up, his hands covering his ears.



*Figure 6:* Flor covers his ears after the forest bombing in *Come and See*.

The sound of ringing and heavy breathing continues as the shot is held and Flor calls out to Glasha. His cries are muffled however, as if heard through *his* ears. Klimov cuts to a reverse shot of Glasha in a clearing, the flora smouldering around her – she too is shouting but, again, her voice cannot be heard. The director then cuts

back to Flor, this time from a slightly lower angle, the young boy looking upward in a daze framed by smouldering trees. This is the first sequence in which Flor's senses are (quite literally) assaulted and the impact is shown to have a clear physical effect (sustained tinnitus as well as a leg injury). As the film progresses, the tinnitus will recur in Flor in moments of distress. In *War and Film*, Chapman comments on Klimov's use of subjective sound. 'The soundtrack' he writes, 'switches from 'white noise' to a blurred cacophony of sounds and words until [Flor's] hearing returns. There is a similar moment in [Spielberg's] *Saving Private Ryan* when Captain Miller is disoriented on the beach, but whereas Spielberg maintains the effect for about a minute, Klimov persists with it for the next half-hour of the film.'<sup>119</sup> Chapman rightly notes here that Klimov's approach differs from that of Hollywood but his fleeting examination of the director's use of subjective sound, his referring to it as an 'effect', fails to take into account its complexity. Tyrus Miller has commented on the lyrical, hallucinatory quality of the scene, suggesting that 'psychologically [it] effectively renders the stunned wonder of the boy at the spectacle and his momentary oblivion to the danger it implies for him and his people'.<sup>120</sup> As Deleuze writes of the pure optical and sound situation, it is '[...] something too powerful, or too unjust, but sometimes also too beautiful which henceforth outstrips [our] sensory-motor capacities.'<sup>121</sup>

The forest bombing scene, as I have suggested, is crucial because it is the first episode to mark Flor, to damage him, a damage rendered through sound design. It is not a question of simply 'persisting with an effect', of switching between subjective

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<sup>119</sup> Chapman, p.108

<sup>120</sup> Miller, 'The Burning Babe: Children, Film Narrative and the Figures of Historical Witness', p. 212

<sup>121</sup> Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p.17

and objective points of view, but is closer to Pasolini's free indirect discourse.<sup>122</sup> Deleuze has remarked that this aspect of Pasolinian theory represents 'a sliding of ground, breaking the uniformity of the internal monologue to replace it by the diversity, the deformity, the otherness of a free indirect discourse.'<sup>123</sup> References to 'sliding', 'breaking' and 'deformity' are particularly apposite in describing the process that Flor and indeed the film itself undergo from the forest bombing onwards. Like its lead character, there is a strong feeling that the film has been damaged, irrevocably so.

As Chapman notes, Flor's tinnitus persists throughout the following scenes, the first of which is a surprisingly light, even celebratory interlude of play.<sup>124</sup> The characters then make their way to Flor's family farm. The play episode having momentarily assuaged the trauma of the forest bombing, Flor still harbours some notion of agency. His intention is to return to his family, to hide them and then re-join the partisan detachment. After being rendered passive, he now readies himself for action.

Klimov's steadicam captures Flor and Glasha's arrival at Flor's family home in reverse tracking shot. The characters move forward tentatively, Flor on crutches and Glasha hauling a suitcase. The camera slows and as the characters draw closer, the sound of buzzing flies emerges on the soundscape. Flor discards his crutches and

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<sup>122</sup> Pier Paolo Pasolini, in his famous elaboration of the cinema of poetry in the mid-1960s, outlined that for free indirect discourse to take place in film, the director was required to have a close affinity with his character. More than any of the other filmmakers in my corpus, Klimov's affinity with his teenage protagonist is clear, a fact confirmed by the director himself in an emotional interview about the film. In the previously-cited interview given by the director for the film's DVD release, he discusses his reasons for making the film. Klimov worked closely with screenwriter Ales Adamovich on whose novel the film is based. The latter had been, like Flor, in his early teens when the real-life events depicted in the film took place. His entire family had been involved in the resistance movement and, according to Klimov, they 'remembered everything.' The director himself recalls a harrowing 'vision' from his own childhood – watching the whole of Stalingrad consumed by fire.

<sup>123</sup> Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p.177

<sup>124</sup> It will be examined in greater detail in the chapter on Childhood Play.

enters the house which is itself empty, lifeless. Glasha appears uneasy, visibly perturbed at the intermittent sound of buzzing but Flor seems unconcerned, serving up some stew left on the stove by his mother. Klimov cuts to a small pile of toys on the floor, then back to a frontal two-shot of Glasha and Flor eating at the table. As they eat, the sound of buzzing becomes more intense, heightened to reflect Flor's gradual realisation of the gravity of the situation. The buzzing represents not only death, but a death that is shockingly fresh, recent – and nearby. Flor rises from the table and Klimov again presents a shot of the abandoned toys, only this time, as a POV shot.



*Figures 7 & 8: The dolls of Flor's young sisters lay strewn on the floor and Flor slowly begins to realise what might have become of his family in *Come and See*.*

This image, coupled with what has now become a torrent of buzzing is Klimov attempting to capture Flor's mental processes, linking his twin sisters to a fate he still cannot (and will not) believe. Cutting back to a close-up of Flor, attention is drawn to his moist lips, oily from his mother's stew. Again, this image, coupled with the buzzing, links his mother with a similarly horrific fate. Klimov holds the shot of Flor facing camera. This succession of shots, overlaid by the sound of buzzing, is a prime example of Deleuze's discussion of the outstripping of sensory-motor

capacities of the seer. Flor seemingly cannot, *will not* accept information delivered by his senses:

‘The sensory-motor break makes man a seer who finds himself struck by something intolerable in the world, and confronted by something unthinkable in thought [...] Man *is not himself* a world other than the one in which he experiences the intolerable and feels himself trapped.’<sup>125</sup>

The buzzing is then coupled with the return of a sound with no source (in the film’s present): the tinnitus from the forest bombing. Flor covers his ears, pressing hard as if trying to block out all the horrific signifiers. He rushes outside, to a nearby well where the buzzing and ringing temporarily ceases. Perched on the edge of the well is a stork<sup>126</sup>. Flor glances down the well, then at the stork, which remains immobile. Klimov’s camera again draws in close to Flor, capturing his mental processes, his lips still moist. The buzzing begins again but, startlingly, Flor smiles as Klimov cuts to Glasha standing at the door. Filled with renewed, yet inexplicable optimism, he tells her he knows where his mother and sisters are and runs away from camera followed by Glasha. The camera tracks quickly forward, careering furiously after them but its flight is halted by a sharp cut as Glasha glances back, to a harrowing image of genocidal horror. From Glasha’s POV, Klimov presents a brief, yet chilling long-shot of the house the characters have just left, at the side of which are piled dozens of naked corpses.

If the forest bombing has marked Flor physically and the subsequent farm scene seeks to capture his mental process, the next scene is a nightmarish blending of the two. The pair arrive at a steaming bog through which Flor, inexplicably, begins to wade. Glasha reluctantly follows but they both appear to have underestimated the struggle and strength required to negotiate the incredibly tough, wet marsh. Unlike

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<sup>125</sup> Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p.164 (Deleuze’s italics)

<sup>126</sup> The significance of which will be explored in the chapter of Childhood Loss.

other sequences in the film in which Klimov draws in close to his protagonist, the camera here remains outside the bog, following the characters' arduous struggle with an almost Rossellinian camera, tracking slowly, right to left. Composed as a sequence shot, this scene is another instance of Klimov's reliance on sound design to render Flor's mindscreen. All diegetic sounds – such as the squelching of the bog and the squawking of birds and other wildlife - are heightened for effect but gradually these sounds are punctured with aural elements with no apparent diegetic source – bursts of classical music, the hum of the observation plane. As with the recurring tinnitus, these are all aural flashbacks from previous sequences which have imprinted themselves on Flor's memory and lead to the creation of a chaotic soundscreen of incredible complexity rendering Flor's intense physical and mental struggle.

Once they have dragged themselves out of the bog, Glasha screams at Flor, 'They're back there, not here! They were killed! All of them! Dead!' The boy, still unwilling to accept his mother and sisters' fate, lunges for Glasha, grabbing her by the neck. Pushing her into the river, he dives in to help her back out. The whole scene is witnessed by an (adult) partisan who approaches the pair and to whom Glasha shouts 'He's led me into the bogs! He's deaf! He's crazy!' A medium shot of Flor is held as, covered in mud, he drives his hand into his forehead, clenching his teeth in desperation. The heightened squawking of birds turns into a wail, akin to the cries of children as, off-camera, Glasha repeats 'His whole family's been killed!'

These three sequences – the forest bombing, the homecoming and the bog – seal Flor's transformation from a character akin to Pasquale, Edmund or Tarkovsky's Ivan - that is to say, oscillating between activity and passivity - to a battered,

traumatized character which, more than any other in post-war European film, fits Deleuze's mould of the seer.

After trawling through the bog, Flor and Glasha arrive at an encampment of refugees. A cacophony of wails and cries swell on the soundtrack and the crowd clears. Laying on the ground, burnt almost beyond recognition, is the uncle from the opening beach sequence. Klimov's camera is unwavering as, in an unbroken medium shot, struggling to speak, the dying man tells of the massacre of the entire village. 'Didn't I tell you not to dig' he tells Flor. The boy then pulls away, plunging his head in the mud. This is ostensibly an attempt to block out the unbearable, horrific sights and sounds, to dull his acute sensory perception. In their digging of the opening scene, their recovery of discarded weapons, Flor and his cousin had in a sense exhumed, brought back to life, the terror of warfare. After his traumatic experiences, and hearing the words of his dying uncle, Flor is overwhelmed with guilt – feeling as if he has in some way brought on the catastrophe. He even tells Glasha, 'it's all my fault' as he leaves the encampment with a group of partisans. Flor finally joins the partisans but gone is the vigour, the enthusiasm with which he enrolled earlier in the film. As he trundles away, he appears catatonic, drained. To return to my earlier discussion, it is as if he is being carried off, inhaled by the world. It is at this point that the boy becomes the pure witness, the definitive Deleuzian seer. To examine Flor's role as such, I will now turn to the film's climactic massacre which is absolutely crucial in understanding the boy's role as witness to Nazi atrocity.

Having escaped the marauding Nazi occupiers and cut off from the partisans, Flor is given shelter by a local villager. It is not long however, before the SS Einsatzkommando arrive in a scene which John Wrathall has described as 'one of the



most appalling – in the case of causing extreme dismay – sequences in all cinema. [...] at once very fluid and dynamic – and agonisingly protracted. We, like Flor, know what is going to happen, but can only watch [...] there is a disconcerting, carnivalesque atmosphere, it is truly an orgy of death.’<sup>127</sup>

Wrathall is undoubtedly right when he refers to the carnivalesque because Klimov, through his framing, his sound design and camera movement, creates a ‘free indirect vision of genocidal horror’<sup>128</sup> which resembles a macabre, grotesque spectacle. ‘It is not so much spectacle as anti-spectacle’ Chapman argues, ‘there is no pleasure to be had, but rather a discomforting sense of voyeurism as we watch the horrific acts.’<sup>129</sup>

In three shots in particular - three *mise-en-abimes* – Klimov clearly makes this link with (anti) spectacle. The first two involve a collaborating officer ‘welcoming’ the villagers. In the first of these, he stands smiling in front of the open doors of the wooden church - a rectangular frame - as if introducing an evening’s entertainment. In the second he is inside the church perched high above the terrified villagers – once again in a rectangular frame.

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<sup>127</sup> Wrathall, p.29

<sup>128</sup> Orr, p.17

<sup>129</sup> Chapman, p.114. Again, this discomfort is most effectively rendered through the sequence’s sound design in which sounds of laughter and enjoyment of the Nazi soldiers are mixed with the anguished cries and sobs of their terrified victims. The stirring sound of (diegetic) martial music too, acts as a counterpoint to the suffering depicted.



Figures 9 & 10: A collaborator prepares the village church for the climactic massacre in *Come and See*.

Unlike Flor's arrival at the partisan encampment, there is no sense here of Klimov's protagonist keenly absorbing - 'drinking' - the sights and sounds which surround him: he is instead swept up by events, powerless to react, yielding definitively to the movement of the world.

For the first time in the film, the steadicam appears to lose its protagonist as it swarms and weaves its way around the mass of villagers being horded in the direction of an empty church. Flor appears intermittently, as if coming up for breath, lifting his head out of the tide of terrified villagers.

Having been packed into the church together with all the villagers, Flor, in wide-eyed panic, climbs toward a window. The open window acts as the third another *mise en abyme* as Flor discovers the full scale of the Nazi killing machine for the very first time. The shot's power, I would suggest, lies in its chilling, revelatory stillness. Tracking slowly from right to left, almost as over a canvas, it replicates the character's own gaze. The aligned soldiers are in position, composed, and ready to fire upon the barn: their stillness and composure contrasting sharply with the terrified panic of the villagers crushed inside the barn. Without any real conviction and indeed almost catatonic, Flor slowly drops out of the building, saving himself from certain death. Chapman observes that it is 'the random and indiscriminate nature of the

violence in *Come and See* that is most disturbing: that Flor survives the holocaust is due to sheer chance than his own resourcefulness or courage.<sup>130</sup> Neither perishing with the rest of the villagers nor purposefully making an escape, the boy is seemingly *drawn out* of the church to continue to see, to witness.



*Figures 11 & 12: Flor escapes from the burning church and is then dragged away by Nazi soldiers in Come and See.*

As he is dragged out, a soldier grabs him at the neck from behind, pushing him toward the camera as it tracks backward. As he is pushed forward, soldiers pass in and out of shot whilst others look on, amused. The camera then comes to a halt and Flor fills the frame. The boy is being shown to the commanding officer who is surveying the massacre from a jeep but Klimov does not cut immediately to a reverse shot, instead holding the frontal shot of Flor to show the boy's wide-eyed terror, his transformation. Conversing amongst themselves, the officers wave Flor away and he is tossed aside left to watch the burning of the church slumped on the ground. The occupiers carelessness, the casual nature of their violence is what allows Flor to survive allowing him to remain the vessel through which Klimov presents his images and sounds. After being forced to pose for a photo, a gun pointed at his temple, Flor slumps to the ground, losing consciousness, the landscape smouldering around him.

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<sup>130</sup> *ibid*, p.116

## 2.6 Conclusion

The concept of the Deleuzian seer is undoubtedly of great value in examining the roles of child characters in war films. However, as I have sought to argue, it is a theory that is far more open to question in relation to neorealism than to a much later work like *Come and See* and this despite the fact that Deleuze makes no mention of Klimov's film in his *Cinema* works. There are various similarities between the films, chief amongst which is their respective bal(l)ade structures and their relative linearity but the child in *Come and See*, especially toward the film's harrowing end, comes closest to becoming a pure seer as opposed to the the neorealist child who oscillates between passivity and activity.

The main reason for this is of course the sheer intensity, the fullness of Klimov's film which, as I have noted above, comes closer in terms of aesthetic to Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* than *Paisà* or *Germany Year Zero*. It is an intensity primarily borne out of technological advances such as stereo sound, widescreen and steadicam photography. The world in *Come and See* overwhelms its protagonist: moving too fast for the adult, let alone the child.

### 3. The Child and Landscape

‘[...] space slips between figures, it opens gaps in the fabric of the action, demanding more time to be contemplated [and] refusing to be reduced to a simple backdrop, emerging often as the protagonist’

Sandro Bernardi, *Il paesaggio nel cinema italiano* (2002)

In the previous chapter, I suggested - following Deleuze and the post-Deleuzian writings of Jaimey Fisher and Tyrus Miller – that the child’s role as seer in the neorealist films is far more problematic than in *Come and See*. The representation of the child in *Paisan* and *Germany Year Zero* is of a figure that, despite his motor-helplessness, oscillates between passivity and activity. In Klimov’s film, although the child does initially attempt to become active, his function becomes that of an absorber, a recorder of events. The previous chapter’s focus on the ‘seer films’ highlighted the child’s relationship with others and his experience of a world in continual movement and flux. I will now incorporate the inter-seer works to examine the role of landscape: that is to say the child’s relationship with its surroundings. Underpinning my analysis will be the recent major theoretical interventions on landscape and film by Sandro Bernardi (2002) and Martin Lefebvre (2006) as well as those of Deleuze. The paradigms put forward by Bernardi and Lefebvre are useful in that, again, they both focus on the idea of flux, of continual movement, of *oscillation* - in this case an oscillation of landscape rather than of the child. As Robert Bird has observed of the representation of space in the films of Tarkovsky, ‘Nature is simply a

flow that absorbs the human gaze, though sometimes it eerily seems to be returning it'.<sup>131</sup>

### 3.1 Recent theoretical interventions on Landscape and Film:

#### From Deleuze to Bernardi and Lefebvre

In Cinema 1, Deleuze describes the *espace quelconque* as a space that is '[...] perfectly singular [but which] which has lost its homogeneity, that is the principle of its metric relations or the connection of its own parts, so that linkages can be made in an infinite number of ways.'<sup>132</sup> Although Deleuze observes that the *espace quelconque* existed before the Second World War, it is in the cinema of the immediate post-war period (Italian neorealism, the German rubble film, a selection of Ealing films) that they begin to proliferate. This is the period of the shattering of the action image and this, in terms of filmic landscape, leads to the 'blurring of locations', the rise of the any-space-whatever. I would argue that the liminal position of the adolescent, his hovering between childhood and adulthood finds a visual correlate in neorealist cinema through the transitional, liminal quality of devastated urban landscapes. Both the child and the landscape that faces them are caught in a state of liminality.

Focusing on Italian cinema (and in particular the films of Michelangelo Antonioni), Sandro Bernardi's *Il paesaggio nel cinema italiano* traces the history of the representation of landscape on film, dividing this representation into two categories: *narrative* and *pictorial*. The former is a landscape which serves and is

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<sup>131</sup> Robert Bird, *Andrei Tarkovsky: Elements of Cinema* (London: Reaktion Books 2008), p.53

<sup>132</sup> Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, p.113

integrated into the film's narrative whilst the latter is one which is reflexive, disturbing narrative. As Bernardi observes, with a pictorial landscape, the story being told is itself not of great importance but rather 'the stories around it'.<sup>133</sup> He makes a clear distinction between *luoghi* (places) and *spazi* (spaces) and argues that a pictorial landscape is one of places without history whilst the narrative landscape is that which transforms *place* into the *space* of action 'giving it a definite meaning closed within the story which is being told'.<sup>134</sup>

Using these terms, Bernardi states that the history of landscape in the first fifty years of the cinema is one which moves from place to space and, with Italian neorealism, back to place. Just as Deleuze argued that neorealism marked a shift from movement to time image, Bernardi sees the movement as representing a watershed in representations of landscape observing that, essentially, it marked a return to the films of the Lumière brothers in its (re)discovery of place. Neorealism is however no regression: it is rather a reflection upon 'everything that had been learned from narrative cinema and a harnessing of this knowledge to view a greater variety of events: the real is thus made up of both the actual and the possible.'<sup>135</sup> These are not 'innocent' places as in the cinema of the pioneers but places which now resonate with a plethora of possible stories. Bernardi argues that the neorealist landscape is dialectic: the present is charged with the past and vice-versa. In an intriguing link with Deleuze but also with Pasolini's free indirect discourse, Bernardi points out that with neorealism, the gaze of the protagonist converges with that of the

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<sup>133</sup> Sandro Bernardi, *Il paesaggio nel cinema italiano* (Venezia: Marsilio Editore 2002) p.22 (All translations mine)

<sup>134</sup> *ibid.* p.22

<sup>135</sup> *ibid.* p.73 Here there are, of course, clear echoes of Deleuze.

camera and that ‘both live through the experience together’.<sup>136</sup> The landscape, he argues, interjects between characters, making a conventional, linear narrative increasingly difficult to mount and sustain.

In his essay ‘Between Setting and Landscape in the Cinema’, Lefebvre reaches further back to discuss the origins of landscape painting, observing that this was made possible by a shift in the representation of landscape from the status of *parergon* to *ergon*, that is to say from being a spatial accessory to a painted scene, landscape could become the primary focus and subject matter of a work. Discussing artists such as Patinir, Lefebvre argues that the birth of landscape in art should be understood as heralding the ‘birth of a way of seeing, the birth of a gaze (that of the painter, the collector, or the critic) by which what was once on the margins takes its place at the centre’.<sup>137</sup> Lefebvre utilises and builds upon art historian Anne Cauquelin’s observations that a distinction should be made between setting and landscape. Setting, according to Cauquelin, is above all else the space of story and event whilst landscape is very much an ‘anti-setting’, it is ‘*space freed from eventhood*’.<sup>138</sup> There are clear echoes here of Bernardi’s narrative and pictorial landscapes.

Following observations by Lury, I outlined in the previous chapter that a film’s identification with a child figure often disturbs its narrative progression. For Lefebvre, the emergence of landscape has an analogous effect, resulting in tension, a ‘tug of war’ between two different modes of representation. The viewer’s

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<sup>136</sup> *ibid.* p.75

<sup>137</sup> Martin Lefebvre, ‘Between Landscape and Setting in the Cinema’ in Martin Lefebvre (ed), *Landscape and Film* (New York: Routledge 2006) p. 27. *Landscape and Film*, undoubtedly a key intervention in the study of the filmic representation of landscape, makes no mention of Bernardi or his equally important 2002 work.

<sup>138</sup> *ibid* p.22



contemplation of setting frees landscape from its narrative function in the same way as identification with the child results in gaps and inconsistencies in narrative development.

Lefebvre suggests that filmic landscape is subject to the responses of individual spectators and that a distinction should be made between *intentional* and *spectatorial* landscapes, that is to say landscapes which show clear intent on the part of the filmmaker and landscapes which invite (and require) spectatorial input.<sup>139</sup> He concludes that '[...] landscape manifests itself in an interpretative gaze. More specifically, it manifests itself in the attempts by artists to translate this gaze into their work and by spectators to interpret this translation or provide their own interpretative landscape gaze.'<sup>140</sup>

Just as my previous chapter on the child as witness argued that the child shifted between passivity and activity, the current chapter, in bringing together the theory of Bernardi and Lefebvre - as well as returning to Deleuze - will argue that landscape too moves between 'passivity' and 'activity'. Whereas the earlier chapter focused on the seer narratives, this chapter will focus on the inter-seer works – *Forbidden Games*, but especially *Ivan's Childhood* and *Diamonds of the Night* - films in which landscape assumes crucial importance. That is not to say that the representation of landscape is not crucial to the seer films, but rather that in the inter-seer works,

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<sup>139</sup> Intentional landscapes themselves come under two categories: *temps morts* and *extra-diegetic*. The former occurs when the filmmaker stalls narrative development (Lefebvre, like Bernardi cites Antonioni as a prime example) whilst the latter occurs with the placement of landscape shots with apparently no link to the film's diegetic world (Lefebvre cites the nondiegetic inserts of Godard). Opposed to the intentional landscape of the filmmaker, spectatorial landscapes occur '[...] when, rather than following the action, I [the viewer] turn my gaze toward space and contemplate it in and of itself. This is cinema's 'impure' landscape, whose existence we cannot clearly attribute to a director's intention, *ibid*, p.48.

<sup>140</sup> *ibid* p. 51

because of their foregrounding of memory and their child characters' mental processes, landscape is 'always personal, never merely decorative or informative.'<sup>141</sup>

### 3.2 Children, war and the filmic landscape

In discussing the representation of landscape in the six films in my corpus, two key factors have to be taken into consideration: the type of landscape (rural or urban) and its chronological positioning (pre-war, wartime or post-war).

Whilst *Paisan* and *Germany Year Zero* take place in urban environments in the immediate aftermath of the war, *Forbidden Games*, *Ivan's Childhood*, *Diamonds of the Night* and *Come and See* unfold in the midst of conflict, in largely rural settings (the exception being the urban flashbacks of Prague in Nemec's film).

In the neorealist works, the viewer is presented with a landscape *mis à nu* in which the past, as Bernardi states, is very much alive in the present. In the flattened, devastated (and thus very *open*) landscapes of neorealism we find that, as Cauquelin has observed, space is freed from eventhood. However, these 'post-eventhood' landscapes *challenge* the characters (and the viewer) to decipher them. In his study of post-war German cinema, Robert R. Shandley discusses Staudte's 'rubble-film' *Somewhere in Berlin*:

'[In the film], rather than a mere metonymic extension of inner discontent, *rubble becomes a player* [...] the film sets up the *mise-en-scene* of the ruins both as a chaotic space and as a malignant agent.'<sup>142</sup>

Landscape in Rossellini's films emerges from the margins in the same way as the figure of the child. These are not the personal spaces of Tarkovsky or Nemec, but are

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<sup>141</sup> Bird, p.53

<sup>142</sup> Robert R. Shandley, *Rubble Films: German Cinema in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 2001), pp. 120 – 121. (My italics)

*confrontational places*: this in contrast to the inter-seer works in which, as Lury has argued, ‘nature is neither gentle nor unkind, it is indifferent.’<sup>143</sup> In *Paisan* and *Germany Year Zero*, there is a keen sense of a dialogue between child and landscape. As Martine Beugnet points out in *Cinema and Sensation*, ‘the stare of the ‘seers’ corresponds to the unfathomable gaze of the inanimate, of the landscapes, objects and buildings that bear witness.’<sup>144</sup>

Whilst *Forbidden Games* is in formal terms the most conventional film in my corpus, its representation of landscape is certainly less so. Just as Bernardi has called certain Rossellinian landscapes ‘landscapes of death’ the same description might be applied to those of Clément albeit in a different way. As it is in *Ivan’s Childhood*, *Diamonds of the Night* and *Come and See*, the cliché of the rural idyll is challenged in *Forbidden Games*. ‘Childhood in the countryside,’ Owain Jones has written on the subversion of the rural idyll cliché, ‘can be tainted and oppressed by adult geographies. The countryside as a space of labour exploitation and poverty – of family conflict and gender inequalities – or as a space of war.’<sup>145</sup> Jones argues that children become victims of ‘adult stratifications of space’ with war, the ‘starkest corruption of space.’<sup>146</sup> While I would certainly agree that it is the adult who has caused this ‘corruption of space’, in *Forbidden Games*, ultimately, it is Paulette who dominates her landscape in a way which none of the other characters in my corpus are able. Indeed, at the end of the film, with the building of their animal cemetery, Paulette and Michel have essentially created their own ‘landscape of death’.

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<sup>143</sup> Lury, p.126

<sup>144</sup> Beugnet, *Cinema and Sensation*, p.109

<sup>145</sup> Owain Jones, ‘Idylls and Otherness: Childhood and Rurality in Film’ in Robert Fish (ed), *Cinematic Countrysides* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2007) p.185

<sup>146</sup> *ibid*, p.185

From the confrontational, challenging landscape which exchanges the gaze of the character in Rossellini to one which is ‘moulded’ by the child in Clément, we come to two key works in which landscape becomes a reflection of (and indeed reaction to) the child’s mental processes. With their use of non-linear, flashback structures, *Ivan’s Childhood* and *Diamonds of the Night* place huge importance on landscape, be it rural or urban. In *Ivan’s Childhood*, Tarkovsky presents two distinct, opposing worlds - that of war and that of peace – worlds distinguishable above all by their landscapes as well as character and camera movement therein. Bird has described the film as ‘a drama of space, not only in the way that Ivan comes from and returns to ‘the other side’, but also – and more fundamentally – in the way that action is equated to the formation of visible locations amidst the elemental flows.’<sup>147</sup>

With Nemec’s *Diamonds of the Night*, landscape is far more elliptical with a less clear division between the landscapes of war and peace. Flashbacks in the Czech film are fragmentary as opposed to the fully-formed dreams of *Ivan’s Childhood*. Focusing primarily on the arches and alleys of Prague’s famous baroque architecture - the Czech capital is not bombed or destroyed – it is an untouched, spectral, ghostly urbanity. I will discuss Nemec’s Prague in detail and how the director draws on centuries of artistic representation of the city as well as the painting of Giorgio De Chirico and Pieter Breugel but it is useful to highlight at this point how Nemec’s film is also the only film in my corpus in which urban and rural landscapes are present in equal measure and how it is the urban rather than the rural which attains an almost dream-like quality. Whereas in neorealism and in the post-neorealism of Clément,

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<sup>147</sup> *ibid*, p.58

we have landscape *mis à nu*, in the Soviet and Czech film we have the soul *mise à nu* through landscape.<sup>148</sup>

In the previous chapter, I discussed how Klimov's *Come and See* marked a return to the cinema of the seer in an extreme, purer form. In this chapter, I will seek to examine the film's representation of landscape and ask whether Klimov's film, like *Paisan* and *Germany Year Zero*, presents a landscape that puzzles and challenges the child.

Despite the differences in its spatio-temporal positioning, there are indeed similarities between the landscapes of Rossellini and Klimov. Essentially – and especially early in the film – the landscape lays before the child: it is beguiling, unsettling. Miller has pointed out the (paradoxically) lyrical quality of the forest bombing scene and there are other key sequences in which landscape induces a similar effect. However - and in contrast to Rossellini - the use of roaming, often rushing steadicam in *Come and See* suggests that rather than contemplating landscape, Klimov 'bypasses' it in his following of Flor. The director's interest, rather than in the physical landscape around Flor, appears to be on the 'landscape' of the boy's face.

### **3.3 The *espace quelconque* and beyond in *Paisan* and *Germany Year Zero*.**

The arena of war and its aftermath is traditionally 'no place for children' but the films of Rossellini suggest that the child might actually be better suited to a negotiation with the new, devastated surroundings than the adult.

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<sup>148</sup> This approach to landscape is of course is one of the key facets of 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanticism. Tarkovsky in particular has often been viewed as imbued in romanticism and I will explore this further in the subsequent chapter on childhood loss, the sea and water as maternal symbol.

In his discussion of the any-space-whatever, Deleuze highlights how neorealism broke with traditional realism, arguing that ‘it is [...] shadows, whites and colours which are capable of producing and constituting any-space-whatevers, *deconnected or emptied spaces* [...] if Italian neorealism was opposed to realism, this is because it broke with spatial co-ordinates, with the old realism of places, and mixed up the references which gave the film movement’<sup>149</sup> Bernardi has suggested that the cinema of Rossellini consists above all in a ‘cleansing of the eye’, which in turn echoes François Vallet who, in *L’image de l’enfant au cinéma* points out that ‘it is as if the world has talked too much, wasted too much, caused too much confusion and complicated the sense of things and that only the gaze of a child can restore [the world’s] original and legendary simplicity.’<sup>150</sup> In his article ‘Rossellini’s Landscapes: Nature, Myth and History’, Bernardi rightly observes that for the Italian director, ‘landscape was central’<sup>151</sup>:

‘It is in the landscape that characters, in their experience of vision, come out of themselves and discover the world they are part of. The relationship of the individual with the whole, the cult of the dead, love, the discovery and observation of the world – these are aspects that link landscape to myth as an epiphany of the sacred.’<sup>152</sup>

The emphasis in the writings of Bernardi is on emerging, on birth. His previously cited observation that neorealism marks a return to a representation of *place* rather than the *space* of conventional narrative film has clear echoes in the work of

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<sup>149</sup> Deleuze, *Cinema I*, pp. 123-124

<sup>150</sup> ‘Comme si le monde avait trop parlé, trop confondu et compliqué le sens des choses et que seul un regard d’enfant pouvait lui redonner sa simplicité initiale et légendaire’ in Vallet, p. 119

<sup>151</sup> Sandro Bernardi, ‘Rossellini’s Landscapes: Nature, Myth, History’ in David Forgacs Sarah Lutton, and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (eds), *Roberto Rossellini: Magician of the Real* (London: BFI Publishing 2000) p. 50

<sup>152</sup> *ibid* p.50

anthropologist Marc Augé<sup>153</sup> on non-places (*non-lieu*). With Augé too, there is a linking of the frequentation of space with birth - with infancy - when, in building on Michel de Certeau's observations on 'the Infancies of Sites' he observes that:

'The gleeful and silent experience of infancy is that of the first journey, of birth as the primal experience of differentiation, of recognition of the self as self and as other [...] all narrative goes back to infancy',<sup>154</sup>

P. Adams Sitney has written of the geographical strategies employed by filmmakers to give landscape meaning and describes how *Paisan* 'moves from the verticality of the Sicilian cliffs [...] to the flat marshes of the Po Valley',<sup>155</sup> Coming after the Sicilian episode and before that set in the Po Valley, the Naples episode contains both vertical and horizontal landscapes, a configuration which mirrors the child's shifting position.

The child, whose role as a threat to the adult male in neorealism I examined earlier, often seems better suited than the adult to deal with the new landscape in which he roams: it almost seems as if, having had no part in its destruction, the child is on 'better terms' with landscape than the adult. It is Pasquale rather than Joe who seems to be at ease in his surroundings, hardly surprising since it is the boy who is the 'native'. Early in the episode, a reverse tracking shot follows the boy as he struts purposefully along a busy alleyway: initially at least, it is he who leads the American GI and not the reverse. In *Germany Year Zero*, it is Edmund, not his adult brother or sick father, that roams the skeletal landscape of Berlin. As Pasquale and Joe sit atop

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<sup>153</sup> It is from the social anthropologist Marc Augé that Deleuze took the term *espace quelconque* despite referencing 'Pascal Augé'.

<sup>154</sup> Marc Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to an Anthropology of Super-Modernity* (London: Verso Publishing 1995) p. 83

<sup>155</sup> P. Adams Sitney, 'Landscape in the Cinema: The Rhythms of the World and the Camera' in Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell, *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993), p. 116

a mound of rubble and tin cans, not only does the child mock the drunken GI, but landscape does too: its state of complete devastation contrasting in tragicomic fashion with Joe's drunken homecoming fantasy.<sup>156</sup>

It would be excessive to overstate the child's kinship with his surroundings – the landscape remains after all, deeply inscrutable – but it is nonetheless a kinship which outstrips that of the adult who, faced with the accusatory gaze of the war-scarred landscape, is often paralysed by fear. Gianni Rondolino has pointed out that even camera movement in Rossellini is 'frightened' and tentative to a degree never before witnessed on film. His example comes from a scene in *Rome, Open City* involving an adult character (Anna Magnani's Pina) observing rubble in Nazi-occupied Rome. Is a similar 'fear' detectable in the Naples episode of *Paisan* or in *Germany Year Zero*? Rather than fear as such, I would argue that camera movement, the camera's covering of landscape, is characterised by a sense of disorientation caused by what Deleuze describes as the breaking down of traditional spatial co-ordinates. This disorientation does not cause a sense of paralysis – on the contrary, Rossellini's camera is drawn to the landscape via the child. In the presence of the child, landscape does not necessarily generate fear - as is perhaps the case with *Rome Open City* - it rather challenges and entices. There are, however, scenes in which the fear that Rondolino detects in *Rome, Open City* resurfaces in the remaining films in Rossellini's war trilogy. In the final sequence of the Naples episode, Joe drives the young boy to his 'home'. In a semi-subjective shot, the camera gazes into the vast Mergellina caves and for a moment, the film's narrative is halted – almost winded -

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<sup>156</sup> Joe's playing is examined in the chapter on Childhood Play.



as Joe (and the viewer) contemplates the crowds of homeless camped in subterranean darkness.

As Bernardi has pointed out:

‘Theft, punishment, the law, no longer make any sense [...] we are now in a hell similar only to that evoked in *Faust*, but a real one, a result of that huge regression which is war. In this flash vision, Rossellini’s eye is an organ of thought because it manages to extract from just one image the entire sense of a period of history.’<sup>157</sup>



Figure 13: The Mergellina caves in the final scenes of the Naples episode of *Paisan*.

Bernardi views this moment as one of Rossellini’s ‘epiphanic instants’. The reasons behind Pasquale’s actions are revealed to Joe through this overwhelming landscape and the adult is made acutely aware of his own complete helplessness. Joe exits the frame, the final shot of the child suggests complete abandonment. Rossellini then employs a sharp, elliptical cut of the GI driving into the distance, bringing the episode to an end.

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<sup>157</sup> Bernardi, ‘Rossellini’s Landscapes: Nature, Myth, History’ in Forgacs, Lutton, Nowell-Smith (eds), p.53



Figures 14 & 15: The final shots of the Naples episode of *Paisan*.

Again, the landscape is shown to strike fear into the adult, presenting him with an unbearable vision before which he rendered helpless. The child, despite his fears, has no choice but to remain: unlike Joe, Pasquale has to a certain extent ‘tamed’ this particular environment.

Jose Luis Guarner has called the opening tracking shots of the flattened, urban desert of Berlin in *Germany Year Zero* ‘hallucinatory’ - the start of a journey into a strange unknown land, with its own laws.<sup>158</sup> In this respect, the opening credit sequence of the film is worth exploring in detail. It is constructed using five tracking shots linked not by clear cuts but by horizontal wipes. The film opens with a shot of a glistening rain-sodden street from an elevated angle, panning upwards to capture a jagged, unrecognisable building. The camera then tracks to the right, lowering to street level. A horizontal wipe leads into another shot, this time from a slightly lower position and it tracks left to right along a flattened, rubble strewn street as the credits roll. This central shot is the longest in the sequence. As the camera tracks steadily, the credits sweep across the screen.

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<sup>158</sup> Jose-Luis Guarner, *Roberto Rossellini* (London: Studio Vista 1970), p.29



Figures 16 & 17: The opening titles of *Germany Year Zero* (Roberto Rossellini 1947)

Rossellini's use of continual horizontal movement allows for a merging of space, foregrounding the disconnected, empty spaces of the Deleuzian any-space-whatever. The credits' unfolding through wipes could be seen as a replication - through movement within the frame - of the rubbing, the 'cleansing of the eye' outlined by Bernardi.

The final two shots in the opening sequence are heavily symbolic. Taken from an aerial position, shot 4 begins with a dedication to Rossellini's son Romano. It then pans to the right over a crumbling chancellery and a horizontal wipe leads into shot 5, again panning left to right but this time over a small area of trees before lowering to the adjacent cemetery.<sup>159</sup> From the dedication to Rossellini's son to the destroyed chancellery to the trees, this final passage moves from images of death (the dedication, the destroyed chancellery) to an affirmation of life (trees). As the titles end, Rossellini lowers his camera into the cemetery, returning to death.

In the film's opening minutes, Rossellini follows Edmund in a series of tracking shots linked, like the opening sequence, by fades. Camera movement in these shots is often characterised by a drawing in toward Edmund as he walks left to right and then

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<sup>159</sup> The graveyard scene in *Germany Year Zero* will be explored in greater detail in the chapter on Play.

a pulling away to frame the child against the rubble-strewn landscape. Like Pasquale in *Paisà*, Edmund appears perfectly at ease in – or certainly ‘on better terms with’ – his devastated surroundings. Like the Neapolitan boy, he carries on as normal (even though the streets are deserted, he looks carefully around before crossing the road).



Figures 18 & 19: Edmund walks the streets of Berlin in the opening minutes of *Germany Year Zero*.

Guarner points out that *Germany Year Zero* can be seen as ‘a documentary on the way an environment can slowly mark a face, distort its features and finally destroy them.’<sup>160</sup> It is an interesting observation but one which requires clarification in relation to Rossellini’s film. I would suggest that it is specifically the actions of those close to Edmund – both adults and other children – that are to blame for his ‘destruction’. His family, the pederast schoolteacher Enning, Herr Rademacher, fellow children, all contribute to Edmund’s demise. The landscape – permeated with death and the spectre of Nazism – entices and draws Edmund toward it but ultimately it is those around him who push Edmund to ‘embrace’ the landscape, an embrace which comes with his desperate final act. Riven with guilt after poisoning his own father, he once again takes to the streets.

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<sup>160</sup> *ibid.* p.31 As a statement, this can be applied with even more emphasis to Flor in Klimov’s *Come and See*.



Figure 20: Edmund once again takes to the streets in the final minutes of *Germany Year Zero*.

Again, Rossellini's camera retains its distance as it watches the young protagonist roam amongst the rubble. The landscape entices Edmund with little signs. In the bowels of a hollowed-out building, he picks up a gun-shaped piece of metal and pretends to shoot himself. He pretends to shoot his own shadow and then slides down a girder onto a lower floor. Edmund's play with death will be examined in a later chapter but in the context of landscape, the final sequence is important because it represents Edmund's final 'embrace' of landscape as he plunges to his death. Comparing the urbanity of Naples in *Paisà* and Berlin in *Germany Year Zero*, it is clear that, in Lefebvrian terms, Rossellini is undoubtedly intentional in his depiction of landscape, but this intentionality does not manifest itself in clarity or precision within the *mise en scène* – the intentionality is one of a rigorous uncertainty, the disconnected and emptied spaces of the Deleuzian any-space-whatever. Both cityscapes are, to varying degrees, mired in defeat and uncertainty but it is *Germany Year Zero* rather than *Paisà* which unfolds in the kind of corrupted space outlined by

Jones, with many of the characters moving within this space themselves morally and physically corrupt.

### **3.4 *Forbidden Games*: Moulding Landscape**

In my discussion of landscape, *Forbidden Games* provides an interesting example of the subversion of the classic urban-rural dichotomy. Unfolding largely in a sprawling rural setting, it is the only film in my corpus to feature a female child protagonist - the youngest and most seraphic of child characters.

At first, the film's close links between childhood and nature appear to conform to the stereotype of the child at one with nature. However, the spectre of death is present in all the actions of Paulette and her cohort Michel. An outwardly idyllic veneer masks a startling morbidity.

Just as Pasquale and Edmund are faced with a landscape permeated with the stench of death and, as seers, are forced to negotiate a landscape of decay and ruin, the child characters in *Forbidden Games* choose to *create something out of death* in a landscape which, outwardly, is untouched by war. Despite being untouched, the landscape in *Forbidden Games* does nonetheless contain clear elements of the gothic.

In the introductory chapter to her 1979 study *William Faulkner's Gothic Domain*, Elizabeth M. Kerr quotes from Francis Russell Hart and the latter's outlining of the qualities of Gothicism:

‘Gothic is a fiction evocative of a sublime and picturesque landscape, of an animated nature to which man is related with affective intensity. Gothic

fiction is a fascination with [...] the dark persistence of the past in sublime ruin, haunted relic and hereditary curse.’<sup>161</sup>

Hart’s observations are particularly intriguing because not only do they link back to certain elements of Rossellinian landscapes,<sup>162</sup> they also look forward toward the landscapes of Tarkovsky. I have introduced these observations at this particular point because, in narrative terms, I believe Clément’s *Forbidden Games* to contain clearer elements of the Gothic than either of the former works. The film’s action takes place far from the supposedly rational and enlightened city in an environment which is markedly less enlightened and riven with suspicion and superstition. On the one hand, a reading of the film at face value would appear to exclude overtly Gothic elements – after all, the open rural landscape is anything but traditionally gothic.<sup>163</sup> However, what gives *Forbidden Games* its unique sense of unease is precisely the superficially idyllic, innocent, pastoral qualities of a landscape which jars with the morbid actions of the two children. In addition, certain movements and positioning of characters within the frame have unmistakably Gothic inflections.

Unlike *Paisan* or *Germany Year Zero*, the exact setting of Clément’s film is not clearly delineated (although it is assumed that it is outside Paris). It would therefore appear difficult to insert the film’s representation of landscape into Bernardi’s Place-Space-Place schema: does *Forbidden Games* continue the re-discovery of place which Bernardi claims was inaugurated by neorealism? As I have

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<sup>161</sup> Francis Russell Hart quoted in Elizabeth M. Kerr, *William Faulkner’s Gothic Domain* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press 1979), p.4

<sup>162</sup> And indeed characters, such as the ‘vampiric’ schoolteacher Enning.

<sup>163</sup> Unless of course, one takes into account the landscapes of Southern Gothic (or neo-Gothic) American writers like Faulkner, Flannery O’Connor and Carson McCullers. In terms of film, an obvious comparison in terms of the child and gothic landscape is Charles Laughton’s *The Night of the Hunter* (1955). Released four years after *Forbidden Games* and based on the novel by Davis Grubb, the aesthetic of Laughton’s film (in particular the extraordinary cinematography of Stanley Cortez) has been described as a meeting of ‘Expressionism and the Mid-West’, Simon Callow, *The Night of the Hunter* (London: BFI Film Classics 2000), p.70.

noted, highly cognisant of its close connotations with the unspoiled idyll of childhood, Clément takes a familiar rural landscape and, whilst not crafting an openly dystopic rurality such as that recently outlined by Kerry Kidd,<sup>164</sup> nonetheless infuses it with a palpable foreboding. Therefore, the film does not represent a re-discovery of place, but rather a re-discovery of *space* through the figure of the child. The rural is no longer the ‘innocent’ idyll. This is mirrored in the character of Paulette as hers is no longer an unspoiled childhood but one which has been contaminated with death.<sup>165</sup>

Having argued that *Forbidden Games* represents a re-discovery of space rather than place, it must also be noted that Clément is, like Rossellini, undoubtedly intentional in his depiction of landscape. The key difference between them is that whilst *Paisan* and *Germany Year Zero* are characterised by an intentionality which highlights uncertainty, Clément’s approach is far more studied. His is not a dystopic rurality but neither is it a traditionally idyllic rurality such as that of the landscape of Ivan’s dreams in *Ivan’s Childhood*.

In his monograph on Clément, André Farwagi observes that ‘throughout the entire story, the point of view will be that of Paulette [and] Michel. The world in which they live (the house, the field, Michel’s family, the neighbours, the priest, the insects etc) is viewed by the children and therefore shown through the deforming magnifying glass of their subjectivity.’<sup>166</sup> This might be overstating the point

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<sup>164</sup> Kerry Kidd, ‘The Child in the Cinema: Representations of a Rural Dystopia in *Billy Elliott* and *The Colour of Paradise*’ in Catherine Fowler and Gillian Helfield (eds), *Representing the Rural: Space, Place, and Identity in Films about the Land* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press 2006), pp.213-223

<sup>165</sup> This contaminant aspect leads back to the Gothic and will be explored further in my discussion of childhood play.

<sup>166</sup> ‘Pendant toute l’histoire le point de vue sera donc celui de Paulette [et] Michel. Le monde dans lequel ils vivent (la maison, le champ, les parents de Michel, les voisins, le curé, les insectes etc) est vu par eux et donc montré à travers la loupe déformante de leur subjectivité’, André Farwagi, *René Clément* (Paris: Editions Seghers 1967) p. 46



somewhat, especially compared with the subjectivity of *Ivan's Childhood*, *Diamonds of the Night* or *Come and See*. I would agree more readily with an earlier observation by Farwagi in which he suggests that 'Clément's characters create a world in their own image and then live within this world that they have created. Life adapts to their rhythm and organises itself around them.'<sup>167</sup> Paulette does indeed mould her surroundings, creating a world away from the horror of the adult world.

A key point to make in the discussion of children and landscape is how *Forbidden Games*, unlike *Paisan* or *Germany Year Zero* presents two child protagonists, differing both in age and sex – unique in my corpus of films. Of these films, only Nemec's *Diamonds of the Night* features two child characters together throughout the film (although they are both male and well into their teenage years). The question would be therefore: does the presence of two characters (the isolated child as opposed to a couple) make a significant impact on the representation of landscape?

Whilst the positioning within the frame of the couple is at times similar in both *Forbidden Games* and *Diamonds of the Night*, the films are markedly different in their formal approach. Both films, as might be expected, feature a considerable amount of two-shots but the camera in Nemec's film is far more mobile, usually following the boys from behind as they make their way through the forest. Visually of course, the major difference between the respective couples is their physical statures: in Clément's film, Michel is seven years older and therefore several inches taller whilst in *Diamonds of the Night*, Manny and Danny are roughly of the same age and build (a similarity reflected in their names).

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<sup>167</sup> 'Les personnages de Clément créent un monde à leur image, puis vivent à l'image de ce monde qu'ils ont créé. La vie se met à leur rythme et s'organise autour d'eux' in Farwagi, p. 45

The question of subjectivity must also arise. If, as Farwagi has claimed, events in *Forbidden Games* are perceived through the ‘deforming magnifying glass of [the children’s] subjectivity,’ the same could surely be said of *Diamonds of the Night*, indeed with even greater emphasis – but whose subjectivity? In *Forbidden Games*, just as in Nemec’s film, one character’s perception prevails over the other. In the former it is Paulette and in the latter Danny.

I have noted how the characters of Edmund in *Germany Year Zero* and Pasquale in *Paisan* are on ‘better terms’ with the landscape around them than their adult counterparts. But in those films, the child characters - whilst on better terms - are still beguiled by the landscape before them, still challenged by it. In *Forbidden Games*, there is no such challenge. Paulette refuses to allow adults to destroy the world she herself has created. Of course, it is exactly *because* she is still very young that she can immerse herself more easily into her own world, cocoon herself almost completely from reality. Clément’s film functions as a bridge between the landscapes of neorealism and the psychological landscapes of Ivan’s Childhood or Diamonds of the Night.

The opening sequence of *Forbidden Games* unfolds in a narrative rather than in a pictorial landscape: the *exode* of 1940. Much of the action takes place as a column of refugees negotiates a bridge - very much a Winnicottian transitional space.<sup>168</sup> The landscape is – like *Paisan* and *Germany Year Zero* - wide open, with few avenues of refuge from the threat of aerial bombardment. The director’s shot composition – successive shots of sharp angles (the bridge) cutting diagonally across the frame - imbues the landscape with a harshness and menace that belies its rural setting.

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<sup>168</sup> I will discuss transitional spaces and objects more fully in the chapters on Childhood Loss and Play.

Clément utilises the bridge as Rossellini uses bombed-out buildings in *Germany Year Zero*. The harsh angles of the bridge here have the analogous effect of angular buildings in the city. By effect, I mean of course the possible effect on adults: Paulette is largely oblivious to the danger swarming above. With this opening scene, Clément a narrative landscape which is harsh and menacing, though of course, only to adults. Paulette is very much disinterested in it, her only concern appearing to be the safety of her pet dog. The disinterest of Paulette in adult external reality effectively leads to her parents' death as, after an air strike, her dog bounds across the bridge. Distraught, Paulette runs after the animal to the horror of her parents who in turn rush after her. A second strike sends bullets spraying across the bridge, fatally wounding mother and father (and dog).

After her parents' death, Paulette is lifted to safety by a bickering couple. The wife, to Paulette's distress, throws the dog off the bridge and into the stream below. Risking her life once again, Paulette runs away from the couple, following the dog's lifeless body as it floats downstream. Just as Pasquale and Edmund *emerge* from their landscapes, Paulette here *enters* a landscape. She abandons the adult world to enter her own (safe) landscape. With a wide shot in a forest clearing in which Paulette is placed centrally surrounded by the impressionist *mise en scène* of blooming trees of early summer, we are clearly in a different world from the angular, harsh landscape of the opening scene, its ravishing, paradisaal quality is equalled only by the dream sequences in *Ivan's Childhood*.



Figures 21 & 22: Paulette (Brigitte Fossey) escapes into the forest in *Forbidden Games* (René Clément 1952)

The ‘landscape of death’ of the opening sequence does however linger, Clément allowing it to spread onto subsequent scenes. A driver-less horse and cart<sup>169</sup> trundles away from the bridge to arrive at the Dollé farm where Clément introduces what will become Paulette’s adoptive family. Death therefore arrives at the Dollé farm not in the form of a German bomber (which swoops down without firing) but in the form of an animal (horse) that again, like the dog, represents death. The horse bolts violently, seriously injuring the family’s older son Georges.

The first encounter between Paulette and the Dollés’ younger son - 12 year-old Michel - takes place in a clearing in the woods. Michel asks the young girl of the whereabouts of her parents. She replies, dryly, that they are both dead - as is her dog. The children arrive at the Dollé farm and Clément introduces Michel’s father in an effectively composed shot which positions Paulette between Michel and M. Dollé. Above them, hanging above the door, is a crucifix, the first of several crosses and horseshoes all charged with keeping death from the door.

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<sup>169</sup> A familiar image from the gothic horror of *Dracula* where a driver-less horse and cart returns from the castle of the eponymous Count.



Figure 23: Paulette meets Michel's (Georges Poujouly) father in *Forbidden Games*.

Death, however, has already infiltrated the house in the form of the injured Georges. So much so that the house, through Clément's expressionistic lighting, almost takes the form of a tomb. In one sequence, with Georges lying painfully in bed and all the family asleep, the fluttering of a moth casts ominous shadows over the room – again, echoes of gothic horror, in particular the films of F. W. Murnau are clear.



Figures 24 & 25: The fluttering of a moth casts expressionist shadows in *Forbidden Games*.

I have argued that landscape in Clément's film does not have the uncertainty of Rossellini but neither does it have the explicit metaphysical qualities of Tarkovsky, Nemec and Klimov. There are however a number of further sequences in which,

through shot composition, the director allows landscape to carry significance. One such scene frames Paulette from behind as she makes her way to a disused barn with her deceased pet and a pick-axe. Attention is drawn to the landscape spread out before the character and, with an abandoned farmhouse in the distance, there are again strong links with the Gothic.

Once inside the empty house, this 5 year-old girl begins digging violently with the axe - a jarring image which perhaps recalls Edmund's attempt to dig graves at the beginning of *Germany Year Zero*. However, the difference is clear: in *Forbidden Games*, Paulette is not attempting to work, to dig in an *adult* world as Edmund is in Rossellini's film, she is immersed in her own 'childscape' – she does not yearn to be integrated into the adult world.



Figure 26: Pick-axe in hand, Paulette approaches a deserted farmhouse in *Forbidden Games*.

The landscape/childscape division is also in evidence in a nocturnal sequence in which Paulette and Michel embark on a trip for crucifixes to adorn their animal cemetery. A reverse tracking shot follows the children with Michel carrying a

wheelbarrow filled with crosses. Clément cuts between a tracking shot following the children and documentary footage of planes flying overhead. This technique is of course common in many fiction films centred around war but here it assumes special significance. By inserting documentary footage, Clément renders in visual terms the tug-of-war between the worlds of the adult and that of the child.

The result of Paulette and Michel's play is the creation of their own 'landscape'. In this scene, the film's narration is halted dramatically by the camera's contemplation of landscape.<sup>170</sup> After a wide establishing shot, the camera moves in, tracking left to right along the crosses marking the graves of animals in the disused barn.



Figures 27 & 28: The animal cemetery built by Michel in *Forbidden Games*.

The camera's panning displays much of the trepidation elucidated by Rondolino in his comment on camera movement in *Rome Open City*. The fact that Clément refrains throughout the film from ever showing the cemetery in such a way gives this

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<sup>170</sup> I would say that this halting of narrative is more glaring in *Forbidden Games* because of the film's comparatively conventional narrative structure, unlike, for example the disjointed, rambling narratives of *Paisà* or *Germany Year Zero*.

sequence an incredible power, made all the more effective when we see Michel, visibly contented, eating an apple<sup>171</sup>.

### 3.5 *Ivan's Childhood: Between two worlds*

*Ivan's Childhood* is a key work from a filmmaker who, like Rossellini, places great importance on this aspect of *mise en scène*. Robert Bird has outlined three kinds of space which dominate all of the director's films: nature, the home and the shrine or cathedral.<sup>172</sup> From his writings, landscape would appear to be intentional for Tarkovsky. In a lecture to student directors, he argued that 'architecture should be a continuation of nature, and in the cinema also the expression of the characters' states and the author's ideas.'<sup>173</sup> For Bird, the issue regarding Tarkovsky and landscape is whether the director 'constructed his spaces as vehicles for his intended meaning or as sites where something unplanned and perhaps unintended can arise spontaneously for the spectator'<sup>174</sup>. In Lefebvrian terms therefore, are Tarkovskian landscapes intentional or are they in fact spectatorial?

Bird argues for the latter, arguing that 'spatial figures are bare stages that invite and even require the spectator to fill in the gaps.'<sup>175</sup> Bird is however referring to the director's entire oeuvre rather than his *début* feature specifically. Tarkovsky's writings in *Sculpting in Time*, suggest a greater sense of intentionality regarding his

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<sup>171</sup> Apples also appear prominently in *Ivan's Childhood* and their symbolic quality will be discussed further on.

<sup>172</sup> Bird, p.52

<sup>173</sup> Tarkovsky quoted in Bird, p.55 Although (urban) architecture features comparatively little in *Ivan's Childhood*, this observation by Tarkovsky is applicable to all the 'city films' in my corpus, in particular Nemec's *Diamonds of the Night*.

<sup>174</sup> *ibid.* p.56

<sup>175</sup> *ibid.* p. 57



first film. He criticises the novel upon which *Ivan's Childhood* is based and its author Vladimir Bogomolov for evoking a 'fragmented, lifeless [and] uncongenial'<sup>176</sup> landscape:

‘I felt all the time that for the film to be a success the texture of the scenery and the landscapes must fill me with definite memories and poetic associations [...] if an author is moved by the landscape chosen, if it brings back memories to him and suggests associations, even subjective ones, then this will in turn affect the audience with particular excitement.’<sup>177</sup>

What makes *Ivan's Childhood* such a pivotal work in terms of representation of landscape is that the film unfolds on two visually and aurally distinct spatio-temporal planes. It is the first of the two inter-seer works in which landscape assumes crucial importance in reflecting child characters' dreams, fears and anxiety. Unlike Rossellini (and to use Starobinski's musical term), rather than presenting a landscape in which the past is part of the present as the bass-line, Tarkovsky presents two distinct worlds. François Vallet has observed that in the film, childhood indeed 'ceases to be representation, it merges completely with the work, in its form, its origin and in its function.'<sup>178</sup>

While spatiality of these respective 'worlds' is relatively clear, their temporality is less so. The film's present is that of war but that of the dream sequences is less discernable. Bálint András Kovács and Akos Szilágyi, have outlined how the director, whilst deeply mindful of the trend in post-Stalinist period for the 'quiet war film' (and these films' penchant for flashback sequences from the reality of war to pre-war tranquillity) uses flashbacks and dream sequences in non-conventional

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<sup>176</sup> Andrei Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema* (Austin: University of Texas Press 1986) p. 28

<sup>177</sup> *ibid.* p.28

<sup>178</sup> 'L'enfance cesse d'être représentation, elle se fonde [...] dans l'oeuvre tout entière, dans la forme [...] dans l'origine et la finalité' in François Vallet, *L'image de l'enfant au cinéma* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf 1991) p.87

fashion: ‘Their function is not to show the peaceful past of the pre-war period but to reveal to us an alternative situation which neither precedes nor follows the war.’<sup>179</sup>

All the dream sequences in *Ivan’s Childhood* take place amidst nature. In the film, nature is a space which Bird divides into ‘three main guises’: the idyllic landscapes of the dream sequences, filled with vegetative and animal life; the swampy wood of the front; and [a] birch grove [...]’<sup>180</sup>. The film opens with a smiling, playful Ivan facing camera behind a tree and spider web. The camera then soars upward over the tree to uncover a sprawling forest. A blissful Ivan appears to drift amongst branches. The camera then glides down from a great height and Ivan glimpses his mother in a clearing. Kovács and Szilágyi have commented on the atemporality of the ‘world of peace’, the setting for the film’s reveries:

‘[...] time and space are absent [from these scenes]. The settings are limitless: the seashore, the forest, the prairie. Unlike the masculine world of war, the world of peace is that of women. In this world, Ivan is surrounded by women; in the world of war he sees only men’<sup>181</sup>



Figures 29 & 30: In the opening dream sequence, Ivan drinks water as his mother looks on before being brought back to the reality of war in *Ivan’s Childhood*.

<sup>179</sup> ‘Leur fonction n’est pas de montrer le passé paisible d’avant guerre, mais de nous révéler une situation alternative qui ne precede ni ne suit la guerre.’ Bálint András Kovács and Akos Szilágyi, *Les mondes d’Andrei Tarkovski* (Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme 1987) p.52 Kovács and Szilágyi’s work, along with that of Robert Bird, is arguably the best study of Tarkovsky’s landscapes.

<sup>180</sup> Bird, p.58

<sup>181</sup> ‘[...] le temps et l’espace en sont absents. Les décors sont illimités: le bord d’un fleuve, la forêt, la prairie. Contrairement au monde masculin de la guerre, le monde de la paix est celui des femmes. Ivan est entouré par des femmes; dans la guerre, il ne voit que des hommes.’ Kovács and Szilágyi p. 55

Fluid, sensuous, alive with texture, Tarkovsky presents the exterior and interior landscapes of the childhood of Ivan. The division of visual representation along the lines of gender (masculine/war, feminine/peace) is indeed a fundamental aspect of *Ivan's Childhood*. Far more pronounced than in the films of Rossellini and Clément, it presents another problematic in the use of landscape and it will be discussed further in the following section on childhood loss. Another way in which Tarkovsky departs from earlier representations of landscape is in camera movement and framing. Whilst movement in the previous films consisted predominantly of horizontal pans, in Tarkovsky's film, the camera is far more mobile. In these opening moments, two of the most striking shots are constructed along vertical rather than horizontal trajectories, built as they are around trees. The first of these is the opening shot whilst the second acts as its anthesis (both in terms of camera movement and mise en scène). The first shot moves rapidly upward, away from Ivan whilst the second moves slowly downward into Ivan who crouches along a flooded forest.



*Figure 31: Ivan negotiates a flooded forest in Ivan's Childhood.*

In an essay from 2008, Gerard Loughlin discusses the representation of trees in Tarkovsky's cinema. '[The director] is more interested in the landscape than the tale, in the semantic ambience of his settings [...] Tarkovsky's trees are always just themselves and always more than themselves. They are one tree and another at the same time.'<sup>182</sup> I discussed earlier the significance of trees in the opening sequence of *Germany Year Zero*. In *Ivan's Childhood*, but also in *Diamonds of the Night* and *Come and See*, trees resound with symbolic import. In his discussion of tree symbolism, Hans Biedermann suggests that 'rooted in the earth but with their branches pointing to the heavens, trees are, like humans themselves, creatures of two worlds, intermediaries between above and below.'<sup>183</sup> This description of the intermediary quality of trees link them to the figure of the child in general but it is clear that Ivan, more than any of the other child characters in my corpus, could be deemed a 'creature of two worlds'. Comparing him with the earlier children, I would suggest that whilst Pasquale and Edmund *emerge from* the landscape and are forced to live within it, are challenged by it, and Paulette withdraws from the adult landscape, creating her own, Tarkovsky takes Rossellini's landscapes and those of Clément and juxtaposes them, presenting them side-by-side.

An important element which distinguishes the dream sequences in *Ivan's Childhood* from scenes which unfold in the wartime present is camera movement. Bird observes that whilst throughout the scenes in bunkers or battlefields, the camera is either stationary or moves independently of the characters, the dream sequences often 'purposefully confuse camera perspective: we now see with Ivan's eyes, now

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<sup>182</sup> Gerard Loughlin, 'Tarkovsky's Trees' in Nathan Dunne (ed), *Tarkovsky* (London: Black Dog Publishing 2008), pp. 81 - 82

<sup>183</sup> Hans Biedermann, *The Wordsworth Dictionary of Symbolism* (Translated by James Hulbert (Ware: Wordsworth Editions 1996), p. 350

we look straight at him or see what he cannot.’<sup>184</sup> In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre describes the ‘space of the dream’ as:

‘[...] Strange and alien, yet at the same time as close to us as is possible. It is a theatrical space even more than a quotidian or poetic one: a putting into images of oneself for oneself.’<sup>185</sup>

Just as Paulette creates an ‘artwork out of death’ within a real space, Ivan plays out his fantasy of a normal childhood in the space of his dreams, the only space where he is free to be a child. Following the opening sequence, Tarkovsky shifts to the cell-like bunker to which Ivan reports after a reconnaissance mission. The exhausted young boy demands vociferously to speak to his commander, a request initially laughed off by Galtsev, the lieutenant. Kovács and Szilágyi have argued that, just as Ivan’s dream world is characterised by a limitless atemporality, Tarkovsky here presents an environment of constriction, of metal and concrete. The bunker - a selection of sharp, hostile angles - has a metallic, cell-like, almost deathly quality with clear echoes of Dreyer’s *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928)<sup>186</sup>.

After a discussion with his superiors, it is agreed that Ivan will remain on the front-line. Tarkovsky’s camera, appearing to be almost angered by the madness of this decision, follows Ivan right-to-left as trundles across a war-scarred landscape with (adult) soldiers marching in the opposite direction. Having adult soldiers marching back is an ironic comment by Tarkovsky but also a clear mark of the determined nature of his young protagonist who is consumed with his quest to avenge the death of his parents, oblivious to the tremendous risk.

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<sup>184</sup> Bird, p.58.

<sup>185</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Translated by Donald Nicolson-Smith)(Oxford: Blackwell 1991) pp. 208 – 209.

<sup>186</sup> The bunker sequence will be examined in greater detail in my chapter on loss.



Figure 32: Ivan moves across the war-scarred landscape in *Ivan's Childhood*.

This scene is followed by what is pictorially and symbolically, arguably the strongest single image of the film. Highly expressionist and from the film's 'masculine' world of war, it follows Ivan's movement right to left, the camera coming to a halt behind a splintered pile of wood. The splinters act as a pointed, jagged frame around Ivan as he arrives to occupy a position at the centre. In Lefebvreian terms, Tarkovsky here is undeniably intentional, charging the landscape with significance, with definite poetic associations, leaving few 'gaps' for the spectator to fill. Like the revelatory sequence of the animal cemetery in *Forbidden Games*, the final, stunning image arrives at the end of a tracking shot: the narrative stalls to allow the viewer to contemplate landscape.



Figures 33 & 34: Two of the most highly symbolic images in *Ivan's Childhood*.

Unlike Clément's film, rather than the viewer being stunned by the child's creation of their own landscape, Tarkovsky presents a landscape that seems to *attack* the protagonist – it appears almost as a violent reply to Ivan's forcefulness. The shot has much of the power of the shot of the Mergellina caves in *Paisan*. The 'background' here, as in several scenes in the film, pushes aggressively to the foreground. As Bird points out, 'having lost his home in nature [...] Ivan is concealed by it, almost swallowed up by it.'<sup>187</sup> For the child in a war context, being 'concealed' might seem to be positive but this is not the case in *Ivan's Childhood*. Bird's reference to being 'swallowed up' by the landscape recalls not only Deleuze's references to characters being 'inhaled by the world' but looks forward to Klimov's *Come and See* in which Flor finds himself being literally 'swallowed up' by the landscape as he negotiates a steaming bog.

In his recent monograph on Tarkovsky, Michel Chion discusses the positioning of characters and background in the director's films. Echoing my previous discussion of Lefebvre and his remarks on the origins of landscape painting, Chion observes that landscape in Tarkovsky is always active and that by refusing to be relegated to mere backdrop, the director always 'keeps open the question of what there is [in the

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<sup>187</sup> Bird, p.59

image] to see, to grasp, to understand.’<sup>188</sup> In highlighting the natural ambiguity which creates tension in his films, Chion, like Bird, suggests that the director’s landscapes are more spectatorial than intentional. Again, as I have argued above, the arguments of Chion and Bird are perhaps more closely applicable to Tarkovsky’s oeuvre in its entirety rather than to *Ivan’s Childhood* in particular.<sup>189</sup>

In this section, I have concentrated my analysis of landscape in Tarkovsky’s film to the landscape of war. Because of its strong links to the maternal and to loss, the landscape of Ivan’s dreams will be explored in greater depth in the following chapter.

### **3.6 *Diamonds of the Night*: Landscapes of adolescent unease.**

Peter Hames has written that Jan Nemec is a filmmaker opposed to realism<sup>190</sup> – a director whose feverish experimentation shows influences of surrealism and who rejects conventional narrative and psychological motivation in favour of ‘creating a sense of identification with [his characters’] mental state.’<sup>191</sup>

In terms of representing childhood, *Diamonds of the Night* presents a progression from the aesthetic approach of Tarkovsky and looks forward to Klimov’s *Come and See*. Like *Ivan’s Childhood*, it has a flashback structure but it also marks the beginning of a return to the cinema of the seer which will be completed by *Come and*

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<sup>188</sup> ‘[...] maintiennent ouverte [...] la question de ce qui est à voir, à saisir, à comprendre’, Michel Chion, *Andreï Tarkovski* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma 2007) p.59 More than any of the directors in my corpus, Tarkovsky employs deep focus photography to striking effect in *Ivan’s Childhood*. In terms of composition, the influence of Andrzej Wajda – especially *Ashes and Diamonds* (1957) – is particularly pronounced.

<sup>189</sup> I would argue, for example, that whilst the landscapes of the director’s first film are primarily intentional, those of a much later film like *Nostalgia* (1983) are far more spectatorial.

<sup>190</sup> Peter Hames, *The Czechoslovak New Wave* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)(London: Wallflower Press 2005) p.171

<sup>191</sup> *ibid.* p.168



See. Like *Ivan's Childhood*, Nemec's film is divided into two spatio-temporal spheres. Maureen Turim argues that non-linearity, 'the dislocation of modernist storytelling serves as analogy for [...] psychic damage.'<sup>192</sup> This is already in evidence in *Ivan's Childhood* but in *Diamonds of the Night* it is developed further and with greater intensity. Vallet's previously cited comment on childhood in Tarkovsky's film 'ceasing to be representation' and 'merging completely with the work' is even more valid for *Diamonds of the Night*. In this section, I will discuss Nemec's use of landscape and its relation to the child.

Placing *Diamonds of the Night* within the theoretical framework provided by (Martin) Lefebvre and Bernardi is far less problematic than with many of the other films in my corpus. Unlike *Ivan's Childhood*, in Nemec's film there appears to be little of the uncertainty as to whether landscapes are intentional or spectatorial.

As outlined above, the film unfolds in two spatio-temporal spheres: the film's present (a forest and, at the end, a tavern) and the Czech capital, Prague - the landscape of the boy's dreams. This 'alternative landscape' is however far from the idyllic, sensuous alternative reality of *Ivan's Childhood*. The idyllic rurality of Ivan's dreams is replaced by an eerie, haunted urbanity: one in which landscape is almost entirely spectatorial. *Diamonds of the Night* in a sense presents a return to neorealism in its re-discovery of place. That is to say, just as Rossellini 're-discovered' Naples and Berlin, Nemec 're-discovers' Prague. However, whilst Rossellini's landscapes are predominantly intentional, Nemec's – as noted above – are overwhelmingly spectatorial. Given that so very little information is provided for the viewer,

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<sup>192</sup> Maureen Turim, *Flashbacks in Film* (New York: Routledge 1989), p.232

attempting to decipher the role and function of the fractured dream images of Prague is more than just a matter of filling gaps.

Angelo Maria Ripellino's insightful 1973 work *Magic Prague* draws on centuries of artistic representation of the Czech capital and provides a useful point of reference for an examination of the physiognomy of Nemec's Prague. Ripellino modifies Nietzsche's declaration on the city of Venice from *Ecce Homo* ('When I seek another word for music, I always and only find the word Venice') by stating that 'when I seek another word for mystery, the only word I can find is Prague.'<sup>193</sup> Ripellino goes on to describe the landscape of Prague as 'permeated by a cosmic mourning [...] with a lugubrious aura of decay.'<sup>194</sup> Perhaps Ripellino's most surprising observations on the city compare the rhythm of Prague to that of 'slow, endless mastication, a catatonia from which it at times awakes with a burst of energy that quickly dies down.'<sup>195</sup> Whilst such metaphors may appear fanciful, examination of Nemec's *Diamonds of the Night* might suggest otherwise.<sup>196</sup>

In terms of the film's present, the dominant setting of *Diamonds of the Night* is that of a forest, a setting prominent in *Forbidden Games* and *Ivan's Childhood* as well as in *Come and See* – indeed in many films focusing on war and childhood. Lury had discussed the role of the forest landscape in films concerning childhood and war:

'Its presence is two-fold. First [...] the forest is the archetypal location of the fairy tale, the site where children are abandoned, where monsters – witches, fairies, ogres and dwarves – live. Second, the forest is the densest and, for the

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<sup>193</sup> Angelo Maria Ripellino, *Magic Prague* (London: MacMillan 1994) p. 7

<sup>194</sup> *ibid.* p.7

<sup>195</sup> *ibid.* p.160

<sup>196</sup> The 'endless mastication' of the home guard soldiers, enjoying a feast after capturing the young boys.

European listener or viewer, the most familiar site of nature at its most benevolent and most terrible.<sup>197</sup>

In the film's opening shot, Nemec plunges straight into the forest, tracking furiously left-to-right, following the flight from captivity of the film's two protagonists. The stately, soaring camera movement of Tarkovsky is here replaced with rougher, breathless, hand-held movement. Landscape here appears to be disregarded, returned to *ergon*, considered only as an obstacle to be negotiated<sup>198</sup>. This is evident in the dominance of medium close-up and absence of establishing shots. It is however, the forest that (initially) allows the characters' refuge. Hames describes Nemec's camera as 'placed so close to the action that it becomes a third participant in the flight.'<sup>199</sup> Its movement stops and starts according to the characters' movement, moving in close then pulling away, a movement which recalls previously cited scenes in *Germany Year Zero*. At one point, the camera pulls slightly ahead of the fleeing boys, appearing to urge them forward. Exhausted, and apparently out of immediate danger, the boys collapse to the ground, gasping for breath. After this frenetic, pulsating opening, the forest landscape emerges to the fore. Nemec presents a close-up of the older boy's hand over which ants crawl – an image recalling that of the ant-filled hand dreamt by Salvador Dalí, one of the most familiar images from Luis Buñuel's *Un chien andalou* (1929). It is also an image which presages the shift about to take place away from the uncompromising realism of the opening shot.

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<sup>197</sup> Lury, p.126

<sup>198</sup> This of course looks forward to Klimov's approach to landscape in *Come and See*.

<sup>199</sup> Hames, p.168



Figure 35: Ants crawl over the boy's hand in a distinctly Buñuelian image from *Diamonds of the Night* (Jan Nemec 1964).

For the first half of the film, Nemec presents over forty different flashback scenes, usually barely five seconds in length. In terms of landscape, they are detached from the rural area of the present and take place in the urban space of Prague. The flashbacks to a depopulated Czech capital differ considerably from those of *Ivan's Childhood*. They are far from idyllic and are less fully formed dreams than shards, fragments of memory. Again, these snapshots of Prague create a rigorously spectatorial urban landscape. With no aerial shots, and few wide establishing shots, the camera is firmly grounded. The static quality of the flashback shots appear to be the complete antithesis of the mobile, soaring camera movement in the Tarkovskian flashbacks. Initially, these scenes consist of static shots of trams, of arches on city blocks but slowly they take on a palpably sexual feel, an element largely absent in *Ivan's Childhood*. Henri Lefebvre notes that 'erotic dreams break up on the reefs of the dreamer's pleasure and disillusion'<sup>200</sup> and this is undoubtedly the case with Nemec's film. The boy in *Diamonds of the Night* is tormented not only by familial

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<sup>200</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp. 208 – 209.

loss but also by strong sexual urges. Whilst the present is more of a narrative landscape, the setting for action and progression of the boys' journey, the city is pictorial landscape, lacking action in the conventional sense but highly symbolic. Just as *Ivan's Childhood* is built on the juxtaposition of masculine and feminine worlds of war and peace, so too is *Diamonds of the Night* but in Nemec's film this representation is obsessively elliptic. In the first half of the film, sequences in the present chart in close-up and medium close-up the boys' slow, largely silent progress through the forest, the camera tracking right to left. In the flashback scenes, we see the young boy in long-shot running toward a tram, then the boy again, this time inside an empty tram, running away from the (static) camera through the empty carriages. The next flashback is, again, from the inside of a train but this time looking out into the street – the train (and camera) moves right to left, the opposite direction to the movement of the boys in the present.

Pictorially, what is striking in the flashback scenes is Nemec's contrasting of round, soft, sensuous shapes with angular lines (architecturally, the roundness of arcs with the sharpness of windows). Indeed, windows (often framing women) are a recurring image. Ripellino writes that many early 20<sup>th</sup> century writers such as Vilém Mrstik portrayed Prague as a tempting and treacherous woman, 'a black temptress'. One of the first 'window shots' is an exterior shot of an upper floor apartment window. The window is sprawled wide open with mattresses and bed linen bulging, overflowing outward. Whilst it is highly sexualised image (testifying to Hames' characterisation of the flashback sequences as 'obsessively erotic') it is also deeply mysterious.

As with many works of the Czech New Wave, the work of Franz Kafka casts a long shadow over *Diamonds of the Night*, in particular, its representation of urbanity. The shot discussed above echoes ‘the constant recurrence [in Kafka’s *The Trial* and *The Castle*] of beds and pallets, the smell of unmade beds [...] the soft world into which the perpetually weary characters sink.’<sup>201</sup> Successive flashbacks reinforce a strong sexual element. Firstly, a woman is shown looking out of a window, her breasts pressed against the sill and then a woman is shown undressing. These images are furtive, often voyeuristic and frequently presage events in the boys’ present.<sup>202</sup> What is clear is that, in keeping with Ripellino’s descriptions, Prague undoubtedly *haunts* the young protagonist: as Oskar Wiener writes, ‘If your passion for Prague does not spell your downfall, you fall victim to a permanent yearning.’<sup>203</sup> As it is for Ivan, Danny’s yearning is not necessarily for a pre-war peace but for an ‘alternative situation’. As I have noted, if Tarkovsky’s dream landscapes in *Ivan’s Childhood* are intentional, those of Nemec - mindscreens of adolescent unease - are spectatorial. Whilst not nightmarish as such, they are unmistakeably and genuinely Kafkaesque. Along with Kafka, there are also distinct links with the metaphysical painting of Giorgio De Chirico. In particular, the Italian artist’s *Mystery and Melancholy of a Street* (1914) which sees an encounter between two figures, both represented by their respective shadows (a child and the statue of a politician) framed by a landscape of arcs shrouded in darkness. As with De Chirico, Nemec’s urbanity is ‘one shot through with mystery and melancholy.’<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Ripellino, p.37

<sup>202</sup> Such as Danny’s confused fantasies of rape and murder when he enters a farmhouse for food. This sequence will be examined in the following chapter.

<sup>203</sup> Oskar Wiener quoted in Ripellino, p.9

<sup>204</sup> Wieland Schmied, *Giorgio De Chirico: The Endless Journey* (Munich: Prestel Verlag 2002) p. 22



Figure 36: Giorgio De Chirico's *Mystery and Melancholy of a Street* (1914)

Just like Tarkovsky, Nemec allows dream and reality to bleed into one another and achieves this perhaps most effectively through sound. In one sequence, with the boys restlessly drifting to sleep in the forest, sounds with no apparent source in the film's present emerge on the soundtrack: the sound of chiming bells, of footsteps, of (female) chatter, doors shutting. The dynamics of these sounds would appear to situate them in an interior rather than an exterior setting.

Away from the urban setting of the film's present, what is the role and function of the rural landscape, especially the forest, in *Diamonds of the Night*? Rather than appearing hostile and closing in on the characters (and despite its darkness) the forest in Nemec's film actually provides shelter for the two fugitive boys. Just like *Come and See*, *Diamonds of the Night* features striking images of collapsing trees. Three separate, low angle shots show a tree collapsing toward camera. Whereas Klimov's film clearly shows that this to be a consequence of aerial bombing, with *Diamonds of the Night*, the source of this destruction is less clear. With Beidermann's previously-cited observations on tree symbolism, I would suggest that in Nemec's film, the destruction of trees carries enormous foreboding, presaging the imminent removal of shelter.



Figures 37 & 38: The collapsing trees in *Diamonds of the Night*.

Before the boys' fateful arrival at the farmhouse, Nemec presents two images - one from the film's present and one a flashback - which represent two of the most joyous moments in the film. In flashback, a wide (right-left) tracking shot presents a snow-covered hillside. The excited cheers of children are heard as they slide down the hill in sledges. Compositionally, but also in its palpable joyfulness, the shot is reminiscent of Bruegel's famous 1565 painting *Hunters in the Snow*.<sup>205</sup>



Figure 39: Images of the snow-covered hillside in *Diamonds of the Night* heavily influenced by Figure 40: Peter Bruegel's *Hunters in the Snow* (1565)

A combination of landscape and weather also bring excitement in a following scene, this time from film's present. During a heavy rainstorm, the boys reach up to the branches to excitedly drink rainwater. In shots highly reminiscent of Tarkovsky

<sup>205</sup> Bruegel has been called 'the inventor of the snow scene' in European painting. *Hunters in the Snow* was also an influence on Tarkovsky and featured in *Solaris* (1972).



(the rain lashing on the apples in *Ivan's Childhood*), Nemec then presents a rapid series of shots of roots, trees and tree stumps, glistening wet under the rain<sup>206</sup>. These shots are repeated, quickened before a piercing, clinical cut introduces the woman who will eventually betray the boys. From a landscape offering refuge (and, as in the latter scene – sustenance) the forest becomes a space in which the young fugitives are turned into prey, hunted down like wild rabbits by the home guard.

After the boys' capture, the film takes place largely in interiors. However, Nemec's protagonists return to the forest landscape in the final scene when, apparently led out for execution, they are shown to walk freely away, the laughter and applause of the home guard soldiers ringing on the soundtrack. Punctuated with short bursts of flashback (Manny smiling with his girlfriend, images of a pregnant woman in an urban alleyway), the scene is deeply ambiguous. As in *Ivan's Childhood*, the two youngsters are shown disappearing into the landscape but in Tarkovsky's film, the image of Ivan running along the shore is charged with the knowledge that he has been executed. In *Diamonds of the Night*, there is no such apparent certainty over the characters' fate. The soldiers are heard taking aim and preparing to fire but no shots are heard, only laughter and applause. Could this actually have happened or is this final scene one in which, like *Ivan's Childhood*, the director presents an 'alternative situation' and the boys have not in fact been executed?

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<sup>206</sup> This sequence will be explored in greater detail in the following chapter.

### 3.7 *Come and See*: The body-landscape

*Come and See* unfolds entirely in a non-urban setting (beaches, forests, villages, farms). Kerry Kidd remarks that ‘spaces of the rural [...] incorporate those moments or visions within characters and identity that separate the individual from the rest of the rural environment: the inner land’<sup>207</sup> and this is particularly apposite for Klimov whose approach to landscape in *Come and See* is, on the whole, intentional. Just as the ‘outer land’ comes under continuous assault, so too does the ‘inner land’ of Flor. Exterior landscape therefore, just as it is in all of the other films in my corpus, is closely linked to the ‘interior landscape’ of the child. Paradoxically, of all my films, *Come and See*, through its use of steadicam photography, appears to ‘bypass’ landscape. That is to say, in the camera’s relentless pursuing of Flor, contemplation of landscape would seem difficult, if not impossible.

In her discussion of the body-landscape and the representation of faces and heads in recent French film, Beugnet outlines that in the conventional system of representation and dramatisation, the close-up on the face ‘does not merely relegate the wider context to the out-of-field but, by the same token, works to foreground a transcendental or singular function of the human figure, to evoke an ideal or identify the hero as a free agent’<sup>208</sup>. Furthermore, ‘the close-up of the face, with its effect of temporal stasis, often stands as the denial of the process of continuous mutation that is inherent in the medium of the moving image’<sup>209</sup>. Beugnet highlights how filmmakers such as Claire Denis and Bertrand Bonello are subversive in this respect, going on to discuss Bonello’s *Tiresia* (2003) and the way in which the director’s use

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<sup>207</sup> Kidd, p.214

<sup>208</sup> Beugnet, p.98

<sup>209</sup> *ibid*, p.99

of close-up bears witness to the mutation in the character's appearance.<sup>210</sup> In *Come and See*, Klimov seeks to highlight a similar transformation. Flor begins as a smiling fresh-faced teenager but as the film progresses, his face becomes marked with the trauma he has experienced. Throughout the film, Klimov captures this transformation in a selection of frontal medium close-ups. Returning to Bernardi and Lefebvre's suggestion that the emergence of landscape halts narrative progression, it could be argued that in Klimov's film it is not contemplation of landscape that disturbs narrative but contemplation of the changing features of the young protagonist. The director invites such contemplation through stark close-up.



*Figures 41 & 42: The radical transformation in Flor's appearance in *Come and See* – from the wide-eyed innocence of the opening scenes to the battered, prematurely-aged features of the film's final scenes.*

Although these shots are usually composed in deep-focus, the last of these has the landscape behind Flor conspicuously out of focus. After bearing witness to genocidal horror, it almost seems as if the landscape around him has been absorbed into the features of the young boy. The landscape, it would appear, has seeped into Flor's very pores: his battered, aged face becoming a corporeal equivalent of the devastated landscapes of *Paisan* or *Germany Year Zero*.

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<sup>210</sup> *ibid*, p.99

Given that so many of the landscapes in *Come and See* are filtered through the sensory perception of Flor, I have already discussed aspects of their representation in my chapter on witness. Flor's first impact with the reality of partisan life has also been discussed in the previous chapter. In terms of landscape, it takes place in an encampment in a forest clearing. The forest buzzes with life, Klimov's use of stereo sound contributes significantly to this vibrancy as sounds of radios, accordions, the rumble of machinery and intermittent chatter pepper the soundscape from all angles. For Flor, this initial elation is short-lived as the partisans leave without him. Distraught, the boy stumbles tearfully away. In doing so, he accidentally steps on a nest, crushing the egg within it.

The relationship between the film's young protagonist and nature and wildlife is one which is key to *Come and See* and is brought to the fore in the forest sequence. Just as I have shown that in all the films in my corpus the landscape refuses to be relegated to mere backdrop, the same is true of Klimov's film. Indeed, in *Come and See* the use of stereo sound gives the landscape even greater breadth and depth. The off-camera sound of birds chirping in the trees is juxtaposed with shots of a visibly distraught Flor, highlighting perhaps the apparent indifference of nature in the face of human travails. This forest landscape however is soon torn apart by bombing. Just as in *Diamonds of the Night*, the toppling of trees in Klimov's film is deeply ominous: a presage perhaps of what lies ahead. After the forest bombing Flor gradually regains his positivity, certain that he has a plan to hide himself, Glasha and his family. 'Tomorrow, mother will be real glad' he tells Glasha whilst taking shelter from the rain, 'I'll hide all of us'. After the boy has outlined his strategy, Klimov cuts to a shot of a stork slowly moving left to right in the clearing. It is an eerie

insert, one with no apparent narrative motivation though undoubtedly charged with symbolism (the bird's long, mythical association with 'delivering' children). The figure of the stork will reappear throughout this section of the film, including the scene – already discussed – where it can be seen atop a well outside Flor's family home.

Flor's return to his family home marks a turning point in the film, the moment in which any remnants of childhood are irrevocably lost. The final moments in the forest would therefore appear to be a sort of farewell to childhood. After the opening beach sequence, it is the only scene in which Flor is shown engaged in play<sup>211</sup>. These final moments of childhood are strongly reminiscent of the dream sequences in *Ivan's Childhood* as well as the previously cited scene in *Diamonds of the Night*: a reminder of what childhood should be, were it not for the tragedy of war. Klimov, like Tarkovsky and Nemec, uses sound to show how childhood is gradually contaminated by war.

I have discussed how the landscape entices, challenges the child in *Germany Year Zero*, how in Tarkovsky's film, it appears to 'attack' the young protagonist but in no other film does the landscape appear to so aggressively 'attack' the child as the gruelling scenes in *Come and See* in which Flor and Glasha find themselves wading through a bog. Again, the landscape here pushes aggressively to the foreground, quite literally sucking the characters into it, overwhelming them. Returning to Bernardi and his discussion of post-neorealist landscapes, it is certainly true that in this sequence, the landscape becomes active, 'refusing to be reduced to a backdrop'. Echoing Bernardi, I would suggest that this kind of landscape *forces, dictates* rhythm

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<sup>211</sup> To be examined in the chapter on Play

- so much so that Klimov's camera (as pointed out in my previous chapter) can only retreat.

Flor's traumatic odyssey leads him to an encampment of refugees. In a state of quasi-catatonia brought on by the realisation of the terrible fate of his family, Flor moves through the mass of the displaced, again completely overwhelmed. Struggling to process the events unfolding before him, he plunges his head into the mud, a desperate attempt to block out, to seal his body from further assault.

An intriguing question arises at this point – what compels Flor, a teenage boy, to continue his journey through this infernal landscape? After the trauma of discovering the fate of his family, why does he continue toward what could be certain death? I would suggest that the refugee scene is the definitive point in which Klimov outlines the mental and physical transformation of Flor from child to adult. Still in a trance-like state, the boy has his hair shaved (significantly, one of the refugees - a woman - comments on the softness of his hair before it is shorn). Klimov presents a striking shot of his protagonist with his cropped hair, topless, staring into camera. At this point, the character of Flor becomes almost analogous to that of Ivan. The last vestiges of childhood innocence have been removed (symbolised by the shaving of his 'soft' blond hair) and he now enters the adult world fuelled by a desire for vengeance. Writing for *Positif* in 1984, Mark Le Fanu observed that camera movement in the opening sequence of *Ivan's Childhood* follows Ivan's 'trajectory of desire.' 'Travelling with the boy' Le Fanu continues, 'the camera concentrates its exploration as much from the back of his head as from his face.'<sup>212</sup> The camera in *Come and See* has up to this point followed a similar movement but this previous

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<sup>212</sup> 'Le mouvement de la caméra effectue la trajectoire du désir [...] voyageant avec le garçon, la caméra concentre son exploration autant sur l'arrière de sa tête que sur sa physionomie', Le Fanu in *Positif*, No. 284 (October 1984) quoted in Vallet, p.134

scene marks the point at which the camera follows this ‘trajectory of desire’, a desire not to embrace the mother figure but a desire for revenge. Having been forced into adulthood, the landscape now appears to open up before Flor. Whilst the forest provided shelter and the bog attempted to entrap the young protagonist, the camera follows his group of partisans from behind over wide, flat landscapes, the camera becoming almost a participant in their journey. The landscape, in its eerie openness again appears to be challenging the child to decipher it, to negotiate it.

The group of partisans soon becomes decimated and Flor once again finds himself alone. After stealing a cow from a farmer, he finds himself being fired upon. He settles down for the night, next to the cow which, after being injured by gunfire is slowly dying from its injuries. He awakes the following morning to a landscape obscured by thick fog. This clouding of vision in which landscape becomes unintelligible, unreadable and opaque presages the dreadful clarity with which Flor will experience the carnage perpetrated by the occupying forces. Before Flor (and the viewer) actually *see* the German occupiers for the first time, their presence is again, rendered through sound. Sounds of a chugging engine are heard seeping through the mist. In a long-shot, a truck is shown, still mostly obscured by fog. The shot is held as shadowy figures begin to spill out from the back. As soldiers continue to emerge, there seem to be more than a vehicle of its size could conceivably hold – again, events are viewed from the mindscreen of the young protagonist, still perhaps in a half asleep state of early morning lethargy.

A sharp cut to a forward tracking shot (following a German motorbike and side-car) ‘shakes lethargy’ out of the film and serves to initiate the film’s final stage. As I have pointed out, in terms of landscape, the savage burning of the Belorussian

village unfolds in what resembles a macabre fairground. With the unshackled abandon of those expecting defeat, the occupying forces are a mass of laughing, clapping, grotesque figures, firing and burning, murdering and destroying landscape without compunction. Klimov's camera, as throughout the film, does not indulge in spectacular long-shots or aerial shots of the carnage, remaining instead firmly at ground level, compounding the sense of chaos, of the inescapability of the violence. There can surely be little doubt of the intentionality of Klimov's portrayal of landscape in this sequence – gone is the ambiguity, the spectatorial quality of Nemec's landscapes. The director is unambiguous in his desire to show the Germans' attempt at not only annihilating an entire population but also an entire territory.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

Following on from my chapter on the child and witness, this chapter has focused on the child's relationship to landscape. Utilising the theory of Sandro Bernardi, Martin Lefebvre and Gilles Deleuze, I have suggested that landscape, like the figure of the child itself, is poised between passivity and activity.

In the neorealist films of Rossellini, with their bereft, disconnected spaces, the child emerges to be faced with a landscape which challenges, entices. However, Pasquale and Edmund often seem better suited than their adult counterparts to a negotiation of the devastated terrain before them. In *Forbidden Games*, the child is shown to withdraw from the harsh adult landscape only to create her own. It serves as a cocoon from the reality of war before being cruelly removed by adults. In the



modernist films of Tarkovsky and Nemec, I have argued that landscape assumes crucial importance in rendering the psychological states of their young protagonists. Tarkovsky divides Ivan's childhood into two clear realms: the reality of war and the alternative reality of the boy's dreams. Not only do the respective realms differ in terms of mise en scene, they also differ in terms of camera movement. Nemec's landscapes in *Diamonds of the Night* are far more fragmented and elliptical than those of Tarkovsky with the urban landscape of Prague shown to haunt the young fugitives as they move through forests and fields. With *Come and See*, I have suggested that Klimov's focus is less on the landscape around the child but the absorption of this landscape into his features. Rather than contemplating landscape, I suggest that the director encourages contemplation of the changing features of the young boy, his transformation from a naïve boy into an experience-hardened partisan.

## 4. Childhood Loss

Echoing, amongst others, André Bazin and his famous observations on the ‘mummifying’ quality of the cinematic image, Andrea Sabbadini has outlined that there is:

‘something intrinsic in films regarding loss [...] films themselves are forms of mourning and recovering lost objects [...] As we contemplate how the characters looked years ago, we remember how we ourselves looked, and we mourn the youth that escaped us.’<sup>213</sup>

In my study, this sense of identification with characters is far more problematic given that the image of youth depicted is far from idyllic. Glen O. Gabbard notes that ‘a great many films depend on the recreation of infantile trauma and anxieties in the audience [...] how many love stories capitalise on the fact that the audience relives their own lost loves each time they sit through a break-up of a relationship on screen?’<sup>214</sup>.

In the previous two chapters, I discussed the child’s relationship with the outside world, that is to say their perception of the world and their relationship to both adults and the landscape around them. The current chapter and the following section on childhood play seek to examine the films’ depiction of psychological processes of the child. No matter what their age or sex, none of the characters in my corpus of films have been spared loss. Pasquale, Edmund, Paulette, Michel, Ivan, Manny, Danny and Flor have all experienced the death of parents or siblings (in the case of Flor it is both). However, apart from *Forbidden Games*, these losses often do not

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<sup>213</sup> Andrea Sabbadini, quoted in Glen O. Gabbard’s foreword to Sabbadini (ed), *Projected Shadows: Psychoanalytic Reflections on the Representation of Loss in European Cinema* (London: Routledge 2007), p. xv

<sup>214</sup> *ibid*, p.xv

form part of the films' explicitly-portrayed events, occurring instead either off-screen or in dream sequences or flashbacks.<sup>215</sup> Just as, visually, the landscapes of these films are often bereft - of buildings, of a physical *home* for the child characters - adult figures too are often absent.<sup>216</sup>

Seizing upon this absence, the young characters often attempt to assert themselves within the (paternal) sphere of war. However, often overwhelmed by this world's hostility, they yearn for the refuge of the (maternal) sphere, that of peace<sup>217</sup>. This refuge does not come in physical form (such as actual physical contact with maternal figures) but is rather symbolic in nature.

In examining how the sense of loss, especially the loss of the nurturing maternal figure haunts the young protagonists - and continuing from the previous chapter's discussion of landscape - I will pay particular attention to how the respective filmmakers utilise both the seashore as a transitional space and water as a maternal symbol. My analysis will develop with specific reference to Gaston Bachelard (1942), and the verse of Indian poet and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore whose collection of childhood poems *The Crescent Moon* (1913) offers one of the most affecting literary representations of childhood loss. I will also draw upon Sabbadini's *Projected Shadows* (2007), a recent anthology of essays on the representation of loss in European cinema.

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<sup>215</sup> Of course Edmund in *Germany Year Zero* also loses a member of his family but - significantly - it is the young boy himself who kills his father.

<sup>216</sup> By 'absent adults', I mean here, positive, nurturing adult figures.

<sup>217</sup> Perhaps rather than 'peace', it is more a sense of a normal childhood in which the children are raised and allowed to develop with the protection of adults.

#### 4.1 Romanticism, Childhood Loss and water symbolism.

W.H Auden, in *The Enchafèd Flood or the Romantic Iconography of the Sea*, outlines four distinctive ‘new notes in the romantic attitude’ toward the sea. Central to the Romantic idea is the desire to leave the land and the city in the belief that the true condition of man can only be found in the voyage: ‘the sea is the Alpha of existence, the symbol of potentiality.’<sup>218</sup> Auden argues that whilst the sea’s power is often destructive, it is nonetheless positive. Of course, whilst exalting the lure of the sea, Romantic writers from Wordsworth to Rousseau also famously exalted the figure of the child. Blessed with an innocent, ‘untutored’ eye, the child in the Romantic tradition is more open to sensory experience than the adult.

‘The child’s wandering eye offered the romantic writer an avenue back to a reality from which he felt fast becoming alienated. By recapturing a naïve [child-like] vision he might once again enjoy an untrammelled intimacy with nature.’<sup>219</sup>

In Alain Corbin’s work on the development and discovery of the seaside in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the author discusses how by the mid-1800s, ‘the beach was emerging clearly as the site of extended maternity’<sup>220</sup> This was due in part to the exaltation by medical theory of the period of the beneficial effects of the sea on the health of young children and the growing attention given to the discourse on feminine nature:

‘Aroused by the proximity of the mothering sea, feminine instincts blossom there which, in a wife, help to protect virtue when it is threatened by a husband’s prolonged absence.[...] the ascendancy of the figure of the child

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<sup>218</sup> W. H Auden, *The Enchafèd Flood or the Romantic Iconography of the Sea* (London: Faber and Faber 1951), p. 21

<sup>219</sup> Tony Tanner quoted in Kathy Merlock Jackson, *Images of Children in American Film: A Sociocultural Analysis* (London: Scarecrow Press 1986) p. 14

<sup>220</sup> Alain Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea: The Discovery of the Seaside in the Western World, 1750 – 1840* (London: Penguin 1995) p.171

on the sea-shore coincides with the renewal of Robinson Crusoe-like adventures; these, more clearly than any previous examples, reveal regression, involution and the ceaseless quest for the mother.<sup>221</sup>

In *L'image de l'enfant au cinéma*, François Vallet asks 'in how many films do children walk on this imperceptible line that separates earth and sea as if it represents for them death or rebirth?'<sup>222</sup> He argues that there are several key films on childhood experience such as Truffaut's *Four-Hundred Blows* (1959) and August's *Pelle The Conqueror* (1989) whose final moments take place on the shore.<sup>223</sup> Quoting Philippe Piazzo, Vallet argues that these children seek to lose themselves in the sea - like seeking refuge in their mother's arms.

W.H. Auden contrasts the 'living barbarism' of the sea' with the 'lifeless decadence' of the desert<sup>224</sup> and I would argue that there is undoubtedly a desert-like quality to the war-scarred neorealist cities of *Paisan* and *Germany Year Zero* or the ghostly Prague of *Diamonds of the Night*. Whilst these distinctions are very much of relevance, Auden's observation on the Romantic belief that the true condition of man can only be found in the (nautical) voyage is perhaps less so. As children, the characters return to the sea - to water - not for 'Robinson Crusoe-like adventures' but often for refuge from the destruction of war. This (physical) movement of the child to the shore takes place in several, though not all, of the films in my corpus but even more pervasive is water symbolism. Water, with its strong links to the mother, water - as a visual and aural presence - often comes to symbolise that which is absent, that

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<sup>221</sup> *ibid.* p.171

<sup>222</sup> '[Et] combien d'enfants marchent [...] sur cette ligne imperceptible qui sépare la terre et la mer come il s'agissait pour eux de mourir ou de renaitre?' (my translation), François Vallet, *L'image de l'enfant au cinéma*, p.142

<sup>223</sup> More recent examples include *Koktebel* (Boris Khlebnikov 2003) and *The Road* (John Hillcoat 2009).

<sup>224</sup> Auden, p.27 (my italics)

which the child has lost in the turmoil of war. Even when the child cannot physically reach the shore, the presence of water (either as drink, as rain, as water from a well or as warm bath water) equals the presence of the maternal.

In his discussion of Kenji Mizoguchi's *Sansho the Bailiff* (1961) in *The Voice and Cinema*, Michel Chion detects in water and the human voice strong elements of femininity - elements capable of transcending space. They represent, Chion argues, 'two instances of that which has neither location or border unless we assign them one.'<sup>225</sup> In films such as *Ivan's Childhood*, *Diamonds of the Night* or *Come and See*, water is shown to not only transcend the spatial, but also the temporal.

Although I have highlighted the positive nature of water, it must also be noted that as an elemental symbol it is highly ambivalent. As Biedermann notes, 'it is associated with both life and fertility and with submersion and destruction.'<sup>226</sup> Essentially, however, water retains a positive force in my corpus of films: 'It is the fundamental symbol of all the energy of the unconscious [...] a favourable, salubrious image'<sup>227</sup>

Whilst my analysis on the representation of loss will not exclusively involve water symbolism, its role is undoubtedly significant. In my films, water - like the figure of the child, like landscape, like play - disturbs narrative, blurs boundaries between subjective and objective, inner and outer, fantasy and reality.

My analysis will take in all the films in my corpus but particular attention will be paid to *Ivan's Childhood*, for Tarkovsky, even as early as his début feature, is

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<sup>225</sup> Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema* (New York: Columbia 1999) p. 113

<sup>226</sup> Biedermann, p. 373

<sup>227</sup> *ibid.*, p.375

unequivocal in the importance he places on the ‘mythology of water.’<sup>228</sup> It is the presence of water, even in the paternal realm of war, that is one of the most important symbols of hope, of consolation. With Tarkovsky and indeed in all the films in my corpus, the *absence* of water (an element associated with the Christian rites of baptism and purification) symbolises ‘the end of the maternal realm, shattered by law of the father.’<sup>229</sup>

#### 4.2 Psychoanalytic Reflections on Childhood Loss and Rabindranath Tagore’s *The Crescent Moon*

Before I examine the representation of loss in my corpus of films, it would be useful to offer some psychoanalytic reflections on the subject of childhood loss. I will do so through the prism of one of the most affecting artistic representations of the subject, a collection of childhood poems entitled *The Crescent Moon* from celebrated Indian poet and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore, a collection characterised by Tagore’s pantheistic, distinctly Spinozian philosophy:

‘the whole universe [is seen in Tagore] as the glorious manifestation of one individual consciousness [...] For him the whole world – land, water, trees, the star-spangled sky, the sun and the moon – is an intimation of a strange power [...].’<sup>230</sup>

<sup>228</sup> Jeremy Mark Robinson, *The Sacred Cinema of Andrei Tarkovsky* (London: Crescent Moon 2006) p. 160

<sup>229</sup> *ibid.* p.162

<sup>230</sup> Psychoanalyst Purnima Mehta has suggested that Tagore was transformed from ‘a benighted romantic into a universal poet’ by recurrent personal anguish. Translated from the original Bengali by the author and published in 1913, *The Crescent Moon* is a collection of children’s poems marked indelibly by two traumatic events in Tagore’s life: the loss of his mother at an early age and the death of his wife in 1902 which left him alone with five young children. In the following years, tragedy persisted and Tagore lost his 12 year-old daughter in 1903, his own father in 1905 and his youngest son, aged 13, in 1907. Purnima Mehta, ‘On The Seashore of Endless Worlds Children Meet: Childhood Loss and Mourning Reaction in Tagore’s Poetry’ in Patrick Colm Hogan and Lalita Pandit (eds), *Rabindranath Tagore: Universality and Tradition* (London: Associated Press 2003), p.246.

<sup>230</sup> Bhabatosh Chatterjee, *Rabindranath Tagore and Modern Sensibility* (Delhi: Oxford University Press 1996) p. 12.

In the fourteenth poem in the collection, 'Clouds and Waves', the child 'plays with the golden dawn, plays/with the silver moon.'<sup>231</sup> In Tagore, as Bhabatosh Chatterjee has noted, 'knowledge and love find ultimate satisfaction only in intuiting the unity. *Separateness is pain*'<sup>232</sup> This aspect of Tagore's worldview is reflected in that of Tarkovsky in particular but also – in varying degrees -in that of Rossellini<sup>233</sup>, Clément, Nemec and Klimov. This Tagorean 'separateness' manifests itself most clearly - in visual but also in aural terms - in the two diametrically-opposed diegetic worlds of *Ivan's Childhood*. What often assuages this feeling of separateness is water and its links to the maternal.

In discussing Tagore's collection of child poems, Purnima Mehta offers an illuminating overview of childhood reaction to loss, calling upon the work of Anna Freud, John Bowlby and John Miller whose 1971 outlining of responses of children to the death of a parent is particularly useful for the purpose of my analysis. Miller outlines a set of five responses of children to the death of a parent. These include a conscious or unconscious denial of the reality of the parent's death, a rigid screening out of all affective responses connected with the parent's death, a marked increase in identification with idealisation of the dead parent, a decrease in self-esteem and the fostering of unconscious fantasies of an ongoing relationship with the parent.<sup>234</sup> Mehta argues that the process of mourning in children is characterised by an unrealistic urge to seek out the lost parent often leading to compulsive wandering. Mourning can only end when the conscious or unconscious searching stops. 'In part', Mehta notes, 'the attempt to seek out the lost object is really a process of

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<sup>231</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *The Crescent Moon* (London: MacMillan 1915) p. 27.

<sup>232</sup> Chatterjee p.13

<sup>233</sup> Rossellini, like Tagore, had also experienced the death of a child – his son Romano – just before making *Germany Year Zero*.

<sup>234</sup> J. Miller, 'Children's Reaction to the Death of a Parent' (1971) quoted in Mehta p.235



mourning.<sup>235</sup> Before beginning her analysis of a selection of the poems in Tagore's *The Crescent Moon*, Mehta presents her eleven 'highlights of the affect in the loss of the child's object'. She points out that loss in childhood creates a void, a loneliness and a despair; that the inability to mourn is represented in the inability to forgive; that the child has fantasies of the transformation of the mother into various other living things; the occurrence of pathological wandering and, finally, that the separation of memory from hope, which is crucial for the ability to mourn and go on with life, is difficult in childhood due to cognitive, emotional and developmental constraints.

These elements are as valid for *Paisan*, *Germany Year Zero*, *Forbidden Games*, *Ivan's Childhood*, *Diamonds of the Night* and *Come and See* as for the poetry of *The Crescent Moon* and as the analysis of each individual film develops, I will examine said elements in detail and attempt to uncover the dominant mourning reaction of the films' child characters.

#### **4.3 'Pathological wandering' and the maternal gaze in *Paisan* and *Germany Year Zero***

Childhood loss and - especially - water symbolism may at first glance seem problematic in the context of Rossellini's *Paisan* and *Germany Year Zero*. After all, whilst characters are certainly affected by loss, the presence of water is decidedly limited. If *Ivan's Childhood* utilises water as a symbol of a maternal presence and therefore as a positive element amidst the trauma of war, then in the Naples episode

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<sup>235</sup> *ibid.* p.239

of *Paisan* and *Germany Year Zero*, water is conspicuous by its absence.<sup>236</sup> As already noted, dryness and aridity dominate both Rossellini's representations of childhood, and this despite the setting of *Paisan* in the *coastal* city of Naples and the fact that the director, in the opening segment of the episode, draws attention to the setting, highlighting the city's importance as a strategic port. However, the latter merely confirms the fact that the shore (the port) has been overwhelmed by the machinery of war, and this is outlined by Rossellini in the segment's opening voice-over, the camera closely following the swoop of a mechanical crane. All of the shore's maternal qualities appear to have been stifled. Pasquale in *Paisan* is very much immersed in the masculine, paternal sphere - not appearing to be suffering many of the mourning responses outlined by Mehta but at this juncture, the viewer is not aware of any familial losses the boy might have suffered. Images of fire (such as the fire-eater in the episode's early moments) dominate over those of water. His almost carefree strutting and hustling in the opening moments show a child more interested in involvement in the paternal sphere. In his article 'The Effect of Loss on the Young', D.W. Winnicott argues that the child who experiences loss, if not given time to work through his/her grief and hopelessness, builds up a false personality which is 'jocular, shallow and infinitely distractable [...] The child never settles to one thing [and goes] from one relationship to another without a capacity to make friends.'<sup>237</sup> This latter observation links effectively with one of the key mourning reactions outlined by Mehta – one which is arguably the dominant mourning reaction in *Paisan* (and in *Germany Year Zero*) – that of 'pathological wandering'. This act of

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<sup>236</sup> Of course water features prominently elsewhere in *Paisà* (notably in the concluding Po Delta episode) but not in the particular episode we are discussing.

<sup>237</sup> D.W. Winnicott, 'The Effect of Loss on the Young' (1968) in Ray Shepherd, Jennifer Johns, Helen Taylor Robinson (eds), *Thinking About Children* (London: Karnac Books 1996) pp. 46-47

wandering<sup>238</sup> links back to my earlier discussion of the Deleuzian bal(l)ade but is also reflected in the movement of water.

Whilst Rossellini frames the Naples episode of *Paisan* with images which appear to have nominal aquatic elements, both are far from being natural or maternal. The opening image of the port is metallic, heavy with machinery, the camera's trajectory following the movement of goods. However, if this earlier shot shows a general stifling of the maternal, with no link to human experience, one of the episode's final images - the shot of the Mergellina caves - presents the viewer with an revelatory image of loss and desolation linked closely to individual human experience, coming as it does after Pasquale's revelation that he has been orphaned. This final revelation includes the last words spoken in the Naples episode. Joe asks the boy in English where his parents are. 'I don't understand' he replies. The GI repeats the question in broken Italian. Pasquale then shuffles around Joe and looks up at him. 'Nun ce stanne chiu'' (literally meaning 'They are not here anymore') he says, matter-of-fact. 'The bombs' he says, 'do you understand bombs? Boom boom.' Although, unlike Pasquale, Edmund in *Germany Year Zero* has not been orphaned, the fact that he has no mother and his elderly father lays seriously ill means that he, very much like Pasquale, has no form of parental guidance. *Germany Year Zero* could be called a 'ceaseless quest for the mother' (the fact that it is indeed 'ceaseless' links it again with pathological wandering) although it is one destined for failure. If water symbolism appears to be confined to the edges of the Naples episode of *Paisan*, in the Berlin of *Germany Year Zero*, water and the sea are completely absent in any *explicit*

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<sup>238</sup> 'to move or travel about, in, or through (a place) without any definite purpose or destination; to proceed in an irregular course; meander, to go astray, as from a path or course', *Collins English Dictionary Complete and Unabridged* (6<sup>th</sup> edition) (London: Harper Collins 2004) p.1808

form. Dryness dominates in such a repressive way that it would appear as if life had been sucked out of the very fabric of the film. W.H Auden's contrasting of the desert and the sea is particularly apposite here, especially his characterisation of the desert representing 'lifeless decadence,'<sup>239</sup> an image redolent of the spectral world of post-war Berlin. There are however several links between water and the maternal sphere in *Germany Year Zero*. For example, returning to the representation of landscape, I do not think it would be fanciful to suggest that the flattened, jagged Berlin resembles a dried sea or riverbed with Rossellini's horizontal roaming camera enacting the lapping movement of waves. I discussed camera movement in the film's opening scenes in my chapter on landscape but here I would add that Rossellini's use of dissolves (both of the image and of the titles) the horizontal tracking of the camera is redolent of the movement of overlapping waves. The film's very first shot is of a damp Berlin street over which appears the logo of the 'Union Générale Cinématographique':



Figure 43: The final image of the opening credits of *Germany Year Zero*.

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<sup>239</sup> Auden, p. 27

Might the camera's gaze itself therefore be characterised as maternal? These points can be argued but there can be little doubt of the strong water-maternity link later in the film, in the sequence in which Edmund poisons his ailing father. Of all the various ways of committing the act of murder, Edmund chooses a *liquid*. This destruction of the father through water might appear to jar with my earlier characterisation of water as symbol of positivity but this act, however terrible, is an attempt at the same kind of purification which Robinson, has discusses with reference to water in the films of Tarkovsky. Gaston Bachelard writes, in his 1942 work on water and dreams, 'if we examine the question in a psychoanalytical sense, we would say that all water is milk. More precisely, every pleasant drink is a maternal milk [...] if all liquid is water, then all water is milk.'<sup>240</sup> The sequence of the poisoning of Herr Kohler is striking in its composition, the lighting especially conjuring a palpable air of the gothic which is found again in *Forbidden Games* in the scenes featuring Michel's similarly ailing older brother. The camera moves between the father on his deathbed (along with elder children Karl-Heinz and Eva) and Edmund preparing his fatal brew. As Edmund adds the poison, the father talks of the tragedy of the First World War as well as his own misfortune. Rossellini allows the latter's dialogue to spill onto shots of Edmund as he prepares to serve his father tea. Without visible emotion, Edmund watches as his father drinks.

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<sup>240</sup> '[...] en examinant le problème dans le sens psychanalytique, nous devons dire que toute eau est un lait. Plus précisément, toute boisson heureuse est un lait maternel [...] tout liquide est un eau; ensuite toute eau est un lait' (my translation), Gaston Bachelard, *L'eau et les rêves: Essai sur l'imagination de la matière* (Paris: Librairie José Corti 1942), p.158



Figures 44 & 45: Edmund prepares poisoned tea for his father and serves him the brew in *Germany Year Zero*.

This drinking of poisoned tea might seem opposed to Bachelard's argument that every pleasant drink equals maternal milk but I would argue that for Herr Kohler, because he ostensibly does not taste the poison, the tea *is* a pleasant drink. He even remarks on how good the tea tastes, offering some to his children. Death, for Herr Kohler is a release from mental and physical pain.

Overwhelmed with guilt after the death of his father, Edmund begins the final phase of his pathological wandering. Viewed through the prism of my argument on the sea as maternal symbol, the final scene of *Germany Year Zero* is particularly interesting, especially taking into consideration my likening of the flattened landscape of Berlin to a seabed. Again, Rossellini presents a complex image, one which has the 'lifeless decadence' of Auden's desert but also which, as a *sea*-bed here takes on definite maternal characteristics through Rossellini's contrasting of the constricting, engulfing shadows of the bombed-out building's interior to the clear, shadow-less open space of the exterior. Edmund's suicidal plunge could be seen as a final desperate attempt to escape the shadow(s) of the paternal and embrace that of the maternal. This 'embracing' of the young boy equals a release from the suffocating guilt he feels as well as the desperate future he envisages. This reading of the film's final scene is strengthened, I would argue, by the fact that, as the young

boy lies face down in the street, the first figure to tend to him is female.<sup>241</sup> The film's last shot, therefore, like the first, has strong maternal links. In medium shot, the woman is shown kneeling over Edmund's dead body. Long cables spill from the right of the frame. As the camera slowly rises, a tram moves right to left. The camera continues to rise until it has framed the bombed-out building above.



Figure 46: One of the final scenes in *Germany Year Zero* in which an unknown woman attends to the body of Edmund after his fatal fall.

In this last scene, it is mise en scene rather than camera movement which resonates with elements of the maternal (the horizontal movement of the tram, the cables stretching across the frame). Death is represented as a release for Edmund, just as it was for his father – the destinies of father and son appear inextricable.

#### 4.4 'Angry effort' and the recovery of the lost object in *Forbidden Games*

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<sup>241</sup> In his study of water and earth in the films of Jean Renoir, Frank Curot argues that the suicide attempt of Boudu in *Boudu Saved From Drowning* (1932), 'would appear to represent a return to the maternal' and that of all Renoir's films it is in *Boudu* that the dream of maternal refuge is most clearly manifested. Frank Curot, *L'eau et la terre dans les films de Jean Renoir* (Paris: Lettres Modernes Minard 1990) pp. 20 – 21.

Mehta has argued that J. Bowlby's 1960 paper 'Grief and Mourning in Early Childhood' represented a breakthrough for the understanding of pathological mourning. Bowlby observed that children were already capable of mourning at the age of 6 months whereas later studies argue that mourning was difficult before the ages of 3 or 4. Mehta gleans from the studies of Bowlby and others that one of the most important phases of loss is 'yearning and longing' and that 'during the phase of yearning, *angry effort* is made to recover the lost object.'<sup>242</sup> I would suggest that this 'angry effort' is the mourning reaction that best characterises the actions of Paulette as she dedicates herself to the creation of an animal cemetery with the help of Michel. It is clear that throughout *Forbidden Games*, Paulette displays far more of the symptoms and mourning reactions set out by Miller and Mehta than Rossellini's children. This could be accounted for by the fact that she is, of course, several years younger than both of Rossellini's characters and that, from what is shown by Clément, she does not seem to have suffered great emotional distress in the past.<sup>243</sup>

In his article on Clément's *Forbidden Games*, André Bazin observes that in looking back at our childhood, we would like to see a mirror of ourselves, purified of all sin, washed of all our human frailties, refreshed by innocence but that Clément's film refuses us such indulgence.<sup>244</sup> If Bazin means by this that the children in *Forbidden Games* are just as flawed as their adult counterparts, it remains somewhat debatable. Even the Bazinian implication that Clément offers a portrait of a childhood tainted by war is open to question. There can be little doubt that the war

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<sup>242</sup> (My italics) Mehta, p. 245

<sup>243</sup> In this respect, the different setting and chronology of *Jeux Interdits* (France in 1940 as opposed to Italy in 1945 and Germany in 1946) should also be taken into account.

<sup>244</sup> (My translation) André Bazin, 'Jeux Interdits' in *Esprit*, December 1952 in André Bazin, *Le cinéma français de la libération à la nouvelle vague* (1945 – 1958)(Paris: Editions de l'étoile 1983) p.105



has a grave impact on the life of Paulette (and, perhaps to a lesser extent, Michel) but, unlike the other characters in my corpus, they in a sense build a barrier against the horrors of conflict, integrating war and loss into their normal childhood play. I would reiterate André Farwagi's comment on the characters in Clément's films 'moulding their surroundings' because in terms of the children's reaction to loss, this is crucial. The other child characters in my corpus on the whole have little control over their surroundings and are either swept up by the war or suffer the conflict's aftermath. It is true that the war impacts cruelly on their lives, but because of several factors (chief amongst which, for Paulette, is her young age), they manage to cocoon themselves from the turmoil of conflict - that is until their final separation at the end of the film: another 'loss image' of undeniable power.

In physical terms, Paulette is the most obviously 'child-like' of the children in my corpus: she does not, like the other children, oscillate between a desire to integrate into the paternal realm and a yearning for maternal refuge – factors such as her age (and sex) exclude this. This is also the case for Michel who, despite being roughly of the same age as the other male children in my corpus, becomes fully immersed in the world he has created with Paulette and, apart from an early scene in which he is shown working the land, rarely yearns for the realm of the paternal.

Bazin observes that there is no purification or washing of sin in *Forbidden Games* and this is accurate for if there is one type of matter that is most obviously dominant in Clément's film it is not water but earth, soil (that which is dug up by the two protagonists in their making of graves).<sup>245</sup> Despite this, and like *Germany Year Zero*, water its connection to maternity is still very much a force in the film. As

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<sup>245</sup> In an early scene from the film, 5 year-old Paulette asks 12 year-old Michel if the bodies of her parents and her dog are 'in a hole to keep them from the rain.'

discussed in earlier chapters, the film's opening scene - the killing of refugees escaping Nazi-occupied Paris - takes place *above* water (on a bridge). After Paulette witnesses the murder of her parents, the carcass of her small dog (very much a Winnicottian 'transitional object') is thrown callously into the river. Distressed, Paulette runs down the embankment, following the dog from the bank as it floats lifelessly downstream.



Figures 47 & 48: Paulette follows the carcass of her dog as it drifts downstream in *Forbidden Games*.

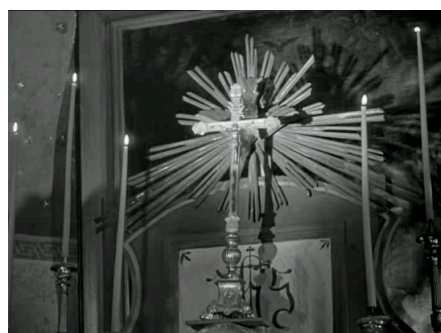
This following of the dog does not bring Paulette into further danger but actually leads her to (relative) safety. Not being able to help her parents, the dead animal in a sense becomes a surrogate and the first of several animals which, for the purposes of the children's play, will come to symbolise human dead. It is significant too, that the river, with its links to maternity, guides Paulette away from danger.

In a study from 1966, Wolfenstein argued that 'the most intense affect experienced by bereaved children is rage rather than grief'<sup>246</sup> and, whereas Pasquale and Edmund are largely passive in their mourning reaction, Paulette is furiously active in her attempts to recover the lost object. I have already noted the violence with which she begins digging a hole for her dead dog but it is not only her physical

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<sup>246</sup> *ibid*, p.245

actions that are characterised by anger or rage. ‘I want cows, horses...*people!*’ she orders Michel<sup>247</sup> after they finish burying their first animal. In a later scene, Michel offers her an apple which she refuses. ‘I prefer café au lait’ she says, a link back of course, to the maternal sphere. Paulette’s gaze, outlined in several point-of-view shots throughout the film – most evidently in the church at Georges’ funeral – is also characterised by a ravenous quality. Both in the church itself and in the cemetery outside, she stares at a variety of crosses with the voraciousness - the *yearning* - that a child might reserve for a favourite toy.



Figures 49 & 50: Paulette and Michel admire crosses during Georges funeral service in *Forbidden Games*.

In another important sequence, Michel spots a live cockroach and, pretending his pencil is a bomb, kills it in front of Paulette who explodes with anger, chastising him and telling him he should not kill animals for burial. Only those animals that are already dead should be buried. It is the film’s clearest link between the loss of Paulette’s parents and the ‘forbidden games’ being played by the children and will be explored further in my chapter on play.

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<sup>247</sup> ‘I want cows, horses...*people!*’ Perhaps somewhat fancifully, some critics and observers, have gone so far as to liken the character of Paulette to that of Shakespeare’s Lady Macbeth.

*Forbidden Games*, like *Paisan*, ends with a quite devastating ‘loss image’. After succeeding in keeping the vicissitudes of war away from a world they themselves have created, Paulette and Michel are cruelly separated. In a scene whose impact is similar to that of the Mergellina caves in *Paisan*, Paulette is presented in a high-angle long-shot, surrounded by bustling human chaos as she calls after Michel. In this desperate final scene, the cocoon created by the children is shown to buckle and crack, allowing the chaos of war to come flooding in. Like *Paisà*, the image marks a brutal arrest to childhood liveliness and, also like Rossellini’s film, its positioning near the end of the film’s narrative gives it a stark finality with no possibility for reprieve.

#### **4.5 Between restlessness and giving-up in *Ivan’s Childhood***

In my discussion of childhood loss and the sea/water as maternal symbol, *Ivan’s Childhood* merits particular attention. In discussing Tarkovsky’s film I will make reference to the poetry of Tagore whose world-view (as displayed specifically in two poems from *The Crescent Moon*, ‘Clouds and Waves’ and ‘On The Seashore’) has close affinities with that of Tarkovsky. In ‘Clouds and Waves’, the child narrator addresses his mother:

Mother, the folk who live up in the  
clouds call out to me –  
‘We play from the time we wake till the  
day ends.  
We play with the golden dawn, we play  
with the silver moon.’<sup>248</sup> (lines 1 – 6)

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<sup>248</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *The Crescent Moon*, p.27

In these lines, the rhythm is one of wave-like undulation. Lines of nine syllables are interspersed with shorter lines of five, two and five syllables respectively. The imagery links clearly with *Ivan's Childhood*, especially the film's opening moments in which Ivan is shown smiling, amidst nature, behind trees and spider-webs. As the joyously unshackled camera soars skyward, Ivan too could be replying to the invitations from 'the folk who live up in the/clouds'. As in the opening minutes of *Ivan's Childhood*, in Tagore's poem, the figure of the mother appears:

‘My mother is waiting for me at home,’  
I say. ‘How can I leave her and come?’  
Then they smile and float away.<sup>249</sup> (11 – 13)

The ‘folk who live up in the/clouds’ could of course be the dead but the fact that they ‘smile and float away’ gives them an angelic quality – far from being hostile or threatening. In *Ivan's Childhood*, upon the first glimpse of the mother, Tarkovsky makes an abrupt cut leading bluntly into the film's dominant temporal sphere – that of war.

Mehta has written compellingly of the presence of death in ‘On The Seashore’ and her observations are equally valid for other poems in *The Crescent Moon*. They are valid too, for my discussion on childhood loss in *Ivan's Childhood*. She talks of the oscillations in the grieving child between ‘restlessness and peace [...] wanting and giving up’ opposing impulses represented by the two opposing diegetic worlds of Tarkovsky's film. Indeed, as Kovacs and Szilagyi have rightly noted:

‘Everything [in *Ivan's Childhood*] revolves around one question: is it possible to cross the chasm – the river - that separates the two worlds – the worlds of life and death?’<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> *ibid*, p.27

<sup>250</sup> ‘Toute tourne autour d’une question: est-il possible de traverser l’abîme – le fleuve – qui sépare les deux mondes, celui de la vie et celui de la mort?’ in Kovacs and Szilagyi, *Les mondes d’Andrei Tarkovski*, p.52

‘Restlessness’ and ‘giving up’ are represented by the world of war in which Ivan finds himself inextricably meshed whilst ‘peace’ and ‘wanting’ are represented by the world of peace as elaborated through the film’s dream sequences. It is also interesting that Kovacs and Szilágyi talk of the ‘river’ that separates the two worlds because, as I have outlined, in *Forbidden Games*, the river is in a physical sense the link between the worlds of war and peace. The credits of *Ivan’s Childhood* (coming after the opening dream segment) unfold over a slow tracking shot which follows the ripples made by Ivan as he slowly moves along the river at night. Ivan is later picked up by the Soviet army and taken in to report. In the metallic (unmistakeably *masculine*) environment of the army bunker, Ivan is shown to be brusque with the officer, displaying traces of the mournful anger displayed by Paulette in *Forbidden Games*.

After giving his report, Ivan has a bath prepared for him in front of the fire – beginning a passage in the film which is quite extraordinary in its rendering of Ivan’s psychic state. The fact that he has the bath prepared for him serves to stir memories of his mother. As he steps into the warmth of the bath water, Tarkovsky creates a synesthetic sense of immersion through the interplay of image and sound. Steam flows out of the bathtub as Galtsev adds hot water. It is this immersion into warm water which loosens, relaxes, relieves tightness and allows, for however short a time, for Ivan to return to a child-like state. Ivan’s lathering of his own body in soft white foam links to Bachelardian milky water.



Figure 51: Ivan lathers his tired, weary body in *Ivan's Childhood*.

As Ivan lathers himself whilst stooped in the bath, the camera is slowly drawn into the small fire burning alongside. As it does so, the crackling of the burning wood is merged and then replaced by sounds of dripping water.<sup>251</sup> Karen Lury has examined the child's encounter with fire, also drawing on Bachelard who, observes of fire that:

‘It is gentleness and torture. It is cookery and apocalypse. It is pleasure for the good child sitting prudently by the hearth; yet it punishes any disobedience when the child wishes to play too close to its flames. It is well being and it is respect. It is tutelary and a terrible divinity, both good and bad. It can contradict itself; thus it is one of the principles of universal explanation.’<sup>252</sup>

Tarkovsky holds the shot of the burning fire which here, contained and yielding warmth, is undoubtedly positive. Echoing Rossellini's dissolves in *Germany Year Zero*, Tarkovsky dissolves this shot into one of Ivan as he turns to camera. The

<sup>251</sup> The audio-visual juxtaposition of fire and water is a device frequently employed by Tarkovsky, perhaps most notably in his final film *The Sacrifice* (1986)

<sup>252</sup> ‘Il est douceur et torture. Il est cuisine et apocalypse. Il est plaisir pour l'enfant assis sagement près du foyer; il punit cependant de toute désobéissance quand on veut jouer de trop près avec ses flames. Il est bien-être et il est respect. C'est un dieu tutélaire et terrible, bon et mauvais. Il peut se contredire: il est donc un des principes d'explication universelle’, Gaston Bachelard, *Le psychanalyse du feu* (Paris: Gallimard 19) p.2

young boy is completely transformed. With his gleaming blond hair free of the mud and dirt of the battlefield, he imparts an angelic, even feminine quality.



Figures 52 & 53: Ivan appears visibly transformed after his warm bath by the fire in *Ivan's Childhood*.

The sound of dripping water continues but its diegetic source is not made immediately. The bath however has had a visibly restorative affect on Ivan. Too tired to eat anything substantial, he falls asleep at the table and is then carried to bed by Galtsev. Tarkovsky's camera crawls slowly – child-like - toward the fire and whilst this image dominates the frame, the off-screen sounds of dripping water can be heard on the soundtrack.

In her article 'And Then There Was Sound: The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky', Andrea Truppin observes that Tarkovsky's use of sound:

'permits his films to travel smoothly through multiple and equally weighted layers of experience. These layers flow simultaneously through one another without the rigid hierarchy that separates most filmic worlds into 'fantasy' and 'reality'.<sup>253</sup>

Truppin writes compellingly about what she calls Tarkovsky's 'system of parallel sound'; the fact that whereas parallel action is used to denote simultaneous events in the material world, 'parallel sound represents both *the relationship between the*

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<sup>253</sup> Andrea Truppin, 'And Then There Was Sound: The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky' in Rick Altman (ed), *Sound Theory, Sound Practice* (New York: Routledge 1992), p. 243



*material and the spiritual* [and] the constantly *shifting hierarchy of dream, memory, fantasy and the present*.<sup>254</sup> This crucial point is also touched upon by Michel Chion in his discussion of ‘the arbitrary, enigmatic, non-hierarchical images’ of Tarkovsky which he suggests recall those of the cinema of the ‘primitives’.<sup>255</sup> Following on from Truppin and Chion, I would say that Tarkovsky’s dream sequences (and this early scene of loss in particular) encourage close identification with the child. The child’s presence, coupled with that of water allows for a shift between spatio-temporal spheres. It is water as a visual but also aural element that helps shift the hierarchy of dream, fantasy and the present. As Robinson has noted:

‘[In Tarkovsky] contemplating water is often a way back into the past [reflecting] the in-between worlds nature of the Tarkovskian protagonists’ predicament [...] Water fills the film with time.’<sup>256</sup>

As I have already touched upon, Bachelard’s writings on water focus on the image of water as milk, a ‘milky water’ and the whiteness of milk:

‘It is the image of a warm and happy night, the image of a clear and enveloping material, an image that encompasses air and water, earth and the sky and which unites them in a cosmic, [...] immense, gentle image.’<sup>257</sup>

Bachelard praises the calming qualities of water and in *Ivan’s Childhood* these qualities are undoubtedly present, albeit only too briefly for the young protagonist.<sup>258</sup>

It is in this state of calmness that Ivan drifts into reverie. The camera tracks right to left from the bright fire into the darkness of the bunker and, as it moves upward, the

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<sup>254</sup> (My italics) *ibid.* p.243

<sup>255</sup> ‘De là [les films de Tarkovski] ce côté brut, arbitraire, énigmatique, non hiérarchisé de ses plans, comme dans les premières images de cinéma’, Michel Chion, *Un art sonore, le cinéma* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma 2003), p.338

<sup>256</sup> Robinson, *The Sacred Cinema of Andrei Tarkovsky*, p.162

<sup>257</sup> ‘C’est l’image d’une nuit tiède et heureuse, l’image d’une matière claire et enveloppante, un image qui prend à la fois l’air et l’eau, le ciel et la terre et qui les unit, un image cosmique, large, immense, douce.’ Bachelard, *L’eau et les rêves*, p. 163

<sup>258</sup> Vida T. Johnson and Graham Petrie, in *The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky: A Visual Fugue* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 1994) have also (briefly) discussed Bachelard in relation to Tarkovsky, arguing that in the director’s first four films, water has a positive significance with ‘water itself ‘alive’ – moving, often falling as rain or flowing as a river.’ (p.208)

director makes the seamless temporal shift. The camera is now at the bottom of a well looking upward at Ivan and his mother both smiling contentedly on the edges as they look down: the camera now *is itself immersed in water*.



Figure 54: Ivan and his mother viewed from the bottom of a well in *Ivan's Childhood*.

Making another temporal shift, Ivan is then shown at the bottom of the well and, just as the world of peace has bled into that of war, so the world of war now bleeds into Ivan's dream. As with the earlier transition, Tarkovsky uses sound as a way of presaging coming action, of shifting hierarchy. With Ivan still in the well, sounds of dripping water are interrupted by the sounds of German soldiers chattering. Ivan, removed from his mother at the bottom of the well, is rendered helpless as (off-screen) she is shot.

The following scene, coming after those in *Paisà* and *Forbidden Games*, is a shattering 'loss-image' and quite breathtaking in its deep-focus composition. To the right of the frame - in the background - is the body of the mother and on the left, in the foreground there is a bucket of water insecurely perched on the edges of the well.



Figure 55: Ivan's mother lays dead in *Ivan's Childhood*.

The bucket spills in slow motion onto the mother's body with Ivan's anguished cry of 'Mama!' swirling around the walls of the well. This sequence validates completely Robinson's observations on the significance of spilt milk/water in Tarkovsky. 'Spilt milk', he writes, 'marks the end of living within maternal jouissance.'<sup>259</sup> By utilising deep-focus here, with its two planes of action, Tarkovsky emphasises the tragic feeling of loss, of complete destitution. Maya Turovskaya has written that 'the death of the mother in *Ivan's Childhood* is not only an image of catastrophe, it is also an image of destitution, of abandonment, of the loss of the natural birthright of maternal kindness.'<sup>260</sup> There are, in terms of imagery, many similarities between this sequence of loss in *Ivan's Childhood* and the events in 'The Hero', the 31<sup>st</sup> poem in Tagore's *The Crescent Moon*. In this poem, one of the most foreboding and fantastical in the collection, a child imagines he is travelling with his mother in 'a strange and dangerous country' (3) characterised as 'desolate and

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<sup>259</sup> Robinson, p.162

<sup>260</sup> Maya Turovskaya, *Tarkovsky: Cinema as Poetry* (London: Faber and Faber 1989) p. 83

barren' (8). As the poem develops, the son reassures his mother as she becomes distressed. However:

Just then there bursts out a fearful yell,  
and figures come running towards us.  
You sit crouched in your palanquin and  
repeat the names of the gods in prayer (22 – 25)

The evil figures which approach mother and son do not unnerve the young narrator as he attacks them. 'Many of them fly, and a great number are/cut to pieces' (46 – 47). The child, victorious and 'all stained with/blood' (51-52), returns to reassure his mother. Emerging from his fantasy, the child asks himself:

A thousand useless things happen day after  
day, and why couldn't such a thing come true by chance?  
It would be like a story in a book (58 – 61)

This poem, with its fantasy of the heroic saving of the maternal figure from danger is interesting in relation to loss in *Ivan's Childhood*. I would suggest that Ivan's unquenchable desire for revenge is fuelled by the fact that he was in a position of complete helplessness as his mother was murdered. An episode such as that outlined in Tagore's poem is a fantasy of the type harboured by Ivan.

In a later dream sequence, Ivan is shown riding through a forest clearing in the pouring rain on a horse-drawn cart filled with apples. He is with a young girl of a similar age and they exchange smiles. Tarkovsky then cuts to a beach where the cart rushes away from the camera spilling its cargo of fruit. As an image it is of course highly redolent of Alexandr Dovzhenko's *Earth* (1928)<sup>261</sup> - the image of the apple heaving with symbolic significance. For the first time, the director presents a female figure who is not maternal but may present a (potential) love interest. In their study

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<sup>261</sup> But, interestingly, also of a similar image in Jules Dassin's *Thieves Highway*, a (revenge-fuelled) 1948 thriller in which a returning US war veteran (Richard Conte) plots vengeance against the fruit trader (Lee J. Cobb) responsible for his father's disability.

of Tarkovsky, Vida Johnson and Graham Petrie discuss an observation in Bachelard's *L'eau et les rêves*, that:

‘in the life of every man, or at least in the dreamed life of every man, the second woman appears: the lover or the wife. The second woman will also be projected onto nature. The woman-landscape will take her place beside the mother-landscape. Doubtless the two projected figures will overlap.’<sup>262</sup>

The authors claim that Tarkovsky reverses this process in *Mirror* (1974) but, for *Ivan's Childhood*, Bachelard's argument is more than valid in its original form. There *is* indeed this slow merging of the mother-landscape with the ‘woman’-landscape. The presence of apples in the latter dream sequence is undoubtedly significant in this respect. As Eugene Stock McCartney writes, in a 1925 article on the apple as token of love, ‘[...] there is reason that [the apple] should be duly praised as that which congregates and allures all senses together.’<sup>263</sup> McCartney discusses the fruit's ‘leading position in the lore of courtship’ and outlines how Plutarch drew attention to its sensuous qualities, ‘so sensuous and smooth to the touch [...] that it makes the hand that touches it odorous without defiling it’<sup>264</sup> In the same article, McCartney quotes R. Ellis' discussion on the fruit's resemblance to female breasts which links, as I will discuss, to Nemec's *Diamonds of the Night* in which round, sensuous objects dominate the hallucinatory state of the young protagonist. It must be noted that the teenage boy of *Diamonds of the Night* is however older than Ivan and therefore the imagery in Nemec's film is far more overtly sexual.

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<sup>262</sup> ‘Dans le vie de tout homme, ou du moins dans la vie rêvée de tout homme, apparait la seconde femme: l'amante ou l'épouse. La seconde femme va aussi être projetée sur la nature. A coté de la mère-paysage prendra place le femme-paysage. Sans doute les deux natures projetées pourront interferer ou se recouvrir’ Bachelard, p.171

<sup>263</sup> Eugene Stock McCartney, ‘How the Apple Became the Token of Love’ in *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, Volume 56 (1925) p.81

<sup>264</sup> *ibid.* p.72

It is clear that in having apples spill onto the beach, Tarkovsky once again overlaps two distinct worlds. Just as the world of war overlaps with that of peace (again, not necessarily *pre-war* but some form of *alternate* world), just as paternal overlaps with maternal, here the maternal - the shore or mother-landscape - finds itself merging with the woman-landscape. The way in which the apples are spilled is also significant: they are not simply dropped from the cart, they are slowly released as the horse moves away from camera so that they sprawl, tumble like waves on the shore, settling almost like foam. The camera rises as the apples are spilled and this sensuous movement contrasts with the stark sequence – a single shot composed in depth - of the spilling of water onto the mother's body in the earlier dream sequence.

I have noted the significance of the movement of apples on the beach in the previous dream sequence and in the final sequence – the final, tragic transition - this movement is replicated by what can be assumed to be the tumbling, rolling movement of Ivan's severed head in an extraordinary, subjective shot. Whilst in motion, Tarkovsky cuts to a medium close-up of Ivan's mother, smiling, bathed in sunlight. Ivan is once again on the seashore, drinking from a pale of water as his mother looks on. In terms of my discussion of the sea/water as maternal symbol, the significance of this sequence is that it both encapsulates and is the ultimate representation of Tarkovsky's offering of an alternate world to that of violence and conflict. Kovács and Szilágyi argue that the opening and closing dream sequences act as a frame for the film and allow the oneiric world of peace, of childhood to supersede, to detach itself from that of war.<sup>265</sup> In this final passage of the film, this 'detachment' is presaged by the violent act of Ivan's decapitation. Whilst the

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<sup>265</sup> 'Le début et la fin du film forment un cadre, qui permet à l'ensemble du second thème [...] de se détacher du fil dramaturgique du premier.' In Kovács and Szilágyi, p.52

movement of camera in the execution sequence follows a right to left trajectory, for the dream sequence, the camera tracks breathlessly after Ivan as he runs along the shore *left to right*: an exhilarated Ivan ‘detaches’ himself from his surroundings just as in the opening sequence he is ‘detached’ from the ground as he soars skyward. Ivan’s body has been broken, mutilated physically but in this final dream sequence - with the young boy in his swimming trunks - attention is drawn to the wholesome, healthy state of his body, a stark contrast to the skeletal Ivan of the earlier bath sequence.

Bachelard’s observations on the work of the German Romantic poet and philosopher Novalis seem particularly apposite for a reading of this final sequence and these observations in turn link with the Tagore poem ‘Clouds and Waves’:

‘When he enters the wonderful water, the first impression of the dreamer is that of ‘resting amongst the clouds, in the purple of the night’. Some time later, he believes he is ‘lying on a soft lawn’. What is therefore the true material of the dreamer? It is neither the cloud nor the soft lawn, it is water. Clouds and lawn are expressions; water is the impression.’<sup>266</sup>

As suggested by Kovacs and Szilyàgi, the final sequence of *Ivan’s Childhood* links closely with the opening scene. In both, Ivan drinks from a pail of water and also in both, whilst embracing the maternal presence, he also distances himself from it: in the opening scene he is shown floating high above the trees and then suspended above the shore, in the final scene, he similarly embraces then abandons the maternal. Indeed, this is perhaps the lasting impression of the character of Ivan, his ethereality, his *otherness* (his floating, his running on water), his Christ-like quality.

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<sup>266</sup> ‘Quand il entre dans l’eau merveilleuse, la première impression du rêveur est celle de ‘reposer parmi les nuages, dans la pourpre du soir.’ Un peu plus tard, il croira être ‘étendu sur une molle pelouse.’ Quelle est donc la vraie matière qui porte le rêveur? Ce n’est ni le nuage ni la molle pelouse, c’est l’eau. Nuage et pelouse sont des expressions; l’eau est l’impression.’ Bachelard, p.177

Returning to the previously cited comments by Francois Vallet (on the fact that the endings of at least five major films on the subject of childhood end on the seashore) to what extent might *Ivan's Childhood* be said to differ, not only from those films but from the other films in my corpus?

Perhaps most significantly, whilst *Germany Year Zero* and *Forbidden Games* appear to feature endings of crushing finality, *Paisan*, *Diamonds of the Night* and *Come and See* - whilst by no means ending positively - find the child at a crossroads. Unlike the pervading pessimism of *Germany Year Zero* or *Forbidden Games*, the mere fact that the children have somehow come through (for now) the horrific experiences of war and occupation lends meagre elements of positivity to the endings of the latter three works. However, the final sequence of *Ivan's Childhood* is quite different. The fact that it is *post-mortem* already sets it apart from most other films on the subject. Furthermore, given the unambiguous fact that Ivan has actually been killed,<sup>267</sup> the outwardly blissful final scene is charged with mournful regret. Given that his protagonist and source of all dream sequences has perished, Tarkovsky (like Klimov with the final scenes in *Come and See*) steps out from the film's diegesis to create a snapshot of the childhood Ivan *should* have had and therefore what the young boy has *lost* in his brief, turbulent life. Viewed this way, the scene is another climactic 'loss image' like those of *Paisan* or *Forbidden Games*.

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<sup>267</sup> As opposed to the ambiguity over the final fates of Manny and Danny in *Diamonds of the Night*.



#### 4.6 Visions of Loss in *Diamonds of the Night*

Perhaps more than any other work in my corpus, *Diamonds of the Night* is that which, in its structure, attempts to most closely identify with the anxiety of its protagonist(s). One of the major causes of this anxiety is undoubtedly loss and this can be inferred through the flashback sequences scattered throughout the film. Unlike the earlier films, very little is known of the young characters' background, apart from the fact that they have escaped from a train bound for a concentration camp. Even less is known of what they have physically lost. Within the film's diegetic world, there is no explicit reference to familial loss but the images that abound in the angst-ridden dreams (and hallucinations) of one of the boys - Danny - offer clues as to his state of mind and in turn, what may be troubling him.

Both *Ivan's Childhood* and *Diamonds of the Night* contain flashback/dream sequences and at this juncture, considering that both directors utilise these scenes as windows into the characters' state of mind, it might be useful to consider the similarities and indeed differences between the use of such sequences. Firstly, *Ivan's Childhood* - as I have already discussed - is divided into two clear diegetic worlds, one clearly opposed to the other. Throughout his dream sequences, Tarkovsky appears to offer an alternative to the war-torn reality of the present, presenting a fully-formed idealised childhood. Whilst its spatio-temporal shifts are undoubtedly similar, *Diamonds of the Night* differs considerably from this approach. Nemec does not offer an 'alternative' world. In terms of a directorial stance, he adopts a position familiar from the Pasolinian cinema of poetry, that is to say an identification that is so close to that of the protagonist that the neuroses or mental instabilities of the

character are reflected in the structure and texture of the film itself. The anxiety of the protagonist is viewed from the inside-out rather than from the outside-in. The consequences of this on the form of the film are clear. *Diamonds of the Night* lacks the accomplished aestheticism of *Ivan's Childhood*. Tarkovsky's graceful camera movements are replaced by the jittery, often dizzying movements of hand-held camera.

In the film's frenetic opening moments, the camera sticks closely to the protagonists as they desperately stagger away into the forest. In terms of my discussion of loss, the camera's gaze in these scenes could be deemed 'maternal', that is to say it assumes a 'maternal', concerned movement. As the camera is drawn closely to the boys, it identifies closely with them whilst appearing to have greater strength, to urge them forward. The first trace of any maternal element in Nemec's film can be said to be therefore embedded in the very texture of the film. There is a less obvious perception of landscape and surroundings (as in *Ivan's Childhood*) and more of a concern for the characters emanating from the camera's concentrated, 'maternal' gaze. Indeed, more than a gaze, the maternal presence is almost physical. As the boys' journey continues, they have their first contact with water, a small stream from which they both drink. Nemec presents a wide, two-shot from above with the boys both crouched forward, their heads in the stream. The director then cuts into two separate close-ups of the individual boys. Manny is shown to splash his face with water whilst Danny laps furiously, imparting - not for the last time - an almost canine quality.

The film's first flashback sequence is a short scene in which, in medium long-shot, the dark-haired boy, Danny, is shown - back to camera - running toward a

moving tram. Behind the tram are three arches (structures which, as I have noted in my section on landscape, abound in the flashback scenes, as indeed do trams).<sup>268</sup> It is interesting to note that having just escaped from a train no doubt filled with refugees bound for concentration camps, in these early flashback scenes, the boy is often shown either in the pursuit of or inside of a tram. However, unlike the ‘death trains’ and indeed contrasting with MacDonald and Kaplan’s description of the Prague tram system, the trams in *Diamonds of the Night* are rarely crowded and instead retain a ghostly quality.

Returning to the film’s present, the boys, followed from behind by the camera, negotiate the encroaching darkness of the forest. Nemec then cuts back to the tram only now Danny (on his own) is on the inside with the camera again behind. He gallops away into the next cabin with the camera initially following but then increasingly hesitant as attention is drawn to the safety handles dangling from the roof of the tram and their clear resemblance to nooses. This tentative quality is, I would suggest, a reassuring on the part of the camera of some form of maternal stance although here it assumes a different form. I have discussed the camera’s maternal gaze in terms of its *closeness* in the film’s ‘present’ but in these flashback scenes, the camera, rather than remaining close to the characters establishes a cautious *distance*. It is as if the child is allowed to roam free whilst the mother looks on anxiously. It is she (the camera) who is cognizant and weary of potential danger whilst the boy is seemingly attracted by the presence of others on the tram. Throughout, the dreams are permeated with anxiety.

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<sup>268</sup> As Callum MacDonald and Jan Kaplan have noted, ‘most ordinary Czechs had to rely on the extensive tram system that linked most points in the city. Wartime trams were dirty, crowded and increasingly dangerous.’ Callum MacDonald and Jan Kaplan, *Prague in the Shadow of the Swastika: A History of the German Occupation 1939 – 1945* (London; Quartet Books 1995) p.141

In this first part of the film, flashback sequences take place almost exclusively inside the tram carriage. Tellingly, direction of movement in these scenes is right to left whereas in sequences in the present, the direction is left to right. Nemec shifts quickly between spatio-temporal locations but, as I have already noted, in contrast to Tarkovsky, the alternative world of the flashback is certainly not presented as a sensuous or idyllic reality but rather as a collection of splinters, of fragments of memory which act as a distorted mirror of the characters' movement in the present. From a maternal presence that, though certainly tangible, is still extra-diegetic, maternal images will slowly emerge in the film's diegetic world. Before examining these elements, it is useful to return to the work of Zalman and his discussion of Nemec's aesthetic approach. Zalman quotes from Max Brod and the latter's observations on the use of symbols in the work of Franz Kafka:

‘The symbol is a spiritual breakthrough [...] it gives an individual image or idea unlimited range – as it radiates, it is the distance of the ray's cross-section that tells us whether the symbol concerns an individual, a nation, or mankind as a whole.’<sup>269</sup>

This is particularly apt in my discussion of window symbolism in *Diamonds of the Night*. Nemec's film, I would suggest, follows the Bachelardian shift from mother- to woman-landscape of *Ivan's Childhood* only in a far more fragmented, disjointed, *symbolic* manner. It is undoubtedly far more overtly sexual, far less lyrical and, according to the properties of the individual image, becomes both a symbol of the boy's sexual frustration and his desire for maternal warmth.

In her 1980 survey of window symbolism in western painting, Carla Gottlieb devotes a chapter to the window in Surrealism:

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<sup>269</sup> Zalman, p.61

‘[...] Surrealist window allegory [as with much of Surrealist art in general] followed Freud, to whom the window signified a woman’s genitals. Any attempt at interpretation will start with this premise, and with the postulate that motifs which are linked to the window probably refer to sex’<sup>270</sup>

The first ‘window shot’ in *Diamonds of the Night* is devoid of any human figure and therefore as a symbol, to quote Brod, has ‘unlimited range.’ However, even without a human figure, it is on one level an image of loss, and on another, an undeniably sexual image. It is an image of loss in that it symbolises homelessness, destitution and the impossibility of rest but on another level the round shapes have clear sexual connotations. These connotations are both confirmed and expanded in following ‘window shots’ as the round shapes of the folded mattress take on human form. As Gottlieb has observed regarding the puzzles of Surrealist painting, ‘[...] manifold images, unrelated to one another and diversified in nature, are assembled in one painting and surprise the viewer by their togetherness.’<sup>271</sup>



*Figures 56 & 57: The image of folded mattresses spilling out of a window is recalled in a later shot of a woman at a window in *Diamonds of the Night*.*

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<sup>270</sup> Carla Gottlieb, *The Window in Art: From the Window of God to the Vanity of Man* (New York: Abaris Books) p.318

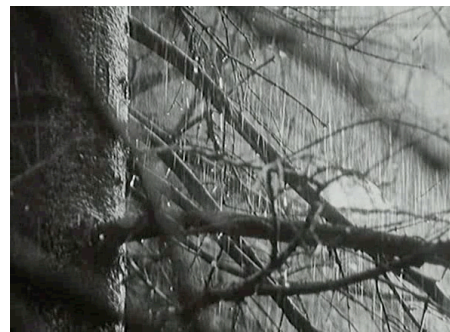
<sup>271</sup> *ibid.* p.318

Immediately after this shot, Nemec returns to the present day journey of the two boys and for the first time, they exchange dialogue.<sup>272</sup> 'Come closer to me' asks the dark-haired boy to his friend. It is significant that after the shot of destitution and loss, here the boy craves closeness, the warmth of another. The boys collect branches to make some form of shelter. The previous 'window shot' is repeated and then Nemec returns to the woods where the boys are now laying face down, resting. This sequence, of the boys resting in the woods, unable to sleep, is punctuated with several flashback shots all are characterised, in graphic terms, by their 'roundness'. The human presence in all these shots is exclusively female and - significantly for my discussion of window symbolism - Nemec includes another window. Again, it is open and again, the shot is from below, but on this occasion, the space is filled not by a folded mattress but by the figure of a voluptuous woman who looks outward, her breasts pressed against the sill, her long black hair swept to one side exposing her neck and shoulders. This highly sexual, ambiguous image is significant in two ways. Firstly, it is a development from the earlier window image, a physical materialisation of what was previously present only in symbolic form and second, this image of a voluptuous woman - certainly a maternal figure but also undoubtedly sexualised - is a clear manifestation of the fusion of mother and woman-landscape discussed by Bachelard. A similar female figure will make an appearance later in the film, framed in an almost identical way by a window at the end of a sequence which is crucial both in symbolic and in purely narrative terms. Recalling *Ivan's Childhood*, this sequence is preceded by aquatic imagery. In this instance, it is heavy rain which the

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<sup>272</sup> This first exchange of dialogue arrives only 13 minutes, 37 seconds into the film.

two boys' try to catch in their mouths. They appear invigorated by the downpour, like Ivan on the apple cart in Tarkovsky's film and Flor, later, in *Come and See*.



Figures 58, 59 & 60: The boys drink from the pouring rain in *Diamonds of the Night*.

Successive shots of rain on trees, on mud presage a scene which represents the only occasion in which the boy, Danny, makes actual physical contact with a female figure in the film's present. Like *Ivan's Childhood*, it is the presence of water that presages the appearance of a 'maternal' figure. Having watched the woman walk across farmland to deliver food to her husband, the boys, overcome with hunger, follow her to a farmhouse. Danny takes his friend's walking stick and decides to enter the house. What follows is a quite extraordinary sequence in which Nemec attempts, through editing and repetition to impart a sense of the frenzied, almost hallucinatory mental state of the starving young boy. Danny calmly comes through

the door shutting it behind him. This is followed by brief shots of a plate, the edges of a tablecloth, the back of a chair, a tidy collection of condiments, a small chaise longue and then, a profile shot of the woman, in an apron preparing food and looking to camera.



Figures 61 & 62: Danny enters a farmhouse and is confronted by a woman in *Diamonds of the Night*.

Unfolding in complete silence, these are all subjective images which serve to not only remind Danny of the domestic normality he has lost but also, at a more basic level, to heighten his overwhelming feeling of hunger. These domestic images are highly reminiscent of the opening scenes of Fritz Lang's *M* (1931) in which the director links similar images of an empty place at the dinner table with the idea of loss. In that film however, as Vicky Lebeau outlines in *Childhood and Cinema*, it is the child rather than the maternal figure that has been lost. Lebeau describes the 'unbearably empty, unbearably still, spaces on which [Lang's] camera dwells' and that the shot of the missing young girl Elsie Beckmann's empty place at the table is 'an image of life stilled.'<sup>273</sup> Lebeau also focuses on the equation, in Lang's film, between sound and life, silence and death. In *Diamonds of the Night* too, there is this stasis, this silence, but in Nemec's film it is borne out of both the mental confusion

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<sup>273</sup> Lebeau, *Childhood and Cinema*, pp. 164-165



of Danny and also his completely debilitated state, he appears so weak that he cannot muster even a few words.<sup>274</sup> Following these brief, 'still-life' shots, Danny races toward the woman, knocking her to the floor with a blow from his stick. This scene of violence is followed by the repetition of the initial shot of Danny at the doorway – it seems as if this attack is only a figment of the young boy's imagination and this is confirmed by the following shot - of the woman lying seductively on the chaise longue, smiling and stroking her hair. The maternal figure now appears to have become sexualised and Nemec's visual representation seeks to mirror the confusion and desperation felt by Danny, a feeling compounded by the following shot which presents the woman, again at the stove, tasting the food she is preparing. A brief flashback shows an exterior shot of the woman, clad in black walking across a field toward camera followed by a reverse shot of her husband walking behind a horse, again toward camera. Returning to the house's interior, Danny rushes toward the woman, striking her once more. But again, this act of violence is imaginary - Nemec repeats once more the initial shot of the boy standing at the door. The woman calmly and silently moves away from the stove toward a table, all the while keeping her impassive gaze fixed on Danny. She takes a round loaf from the bread bin and proceeds to cut slices. Close-ups of the bread being sliced are interspersed with shots of Danny approaching camera, his own gaze fixed on the bread. After grabbing the slices from the table, the boy slowly moves backward and Nemec presents a wordless exchange of glances in shot-reverse-shot. Once more, however, Danny rushes toward the woman, knocking her to the floor. In this final version of the act of violence (already perpetrated twice) Nemec extends its duration, adding a reverse

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<sup>274</sup> The domestic meal retains its links with loss in *Come and See* and these will be examined in the following section on loss in Klimov's film.

tracking shot, moving down the woman's body as she lays on the floor then cutting in to a close-up in which her hair is spread out, almost gorgon-like. The fact that this third version of the same shot is longer than the previous two leads to the assumption that it is part of the film's actual events and not indeed a figment of the boy's imagination. Nemec cuts from the woman on the floor to Danny leaving out the door. A shot of the closed door is held, suspensefully, before a reverse shot shows the woman, upright, unharmed, looking impassively at the camera.

This detailed analysis of this sequence's events is crucial in the present discussion of loss. Nemec outlines how, in a quasi-hallucinatory, debilitated state of starvation and tiredness, Danny's initial vision of domestic normality, that is to say, *images of what he has lost* - images of a mother figure at the stove, of a plate waiting on the table - return to haunt him.

Once outside, the two boys find they are unable to chew the dry bread and cough up blood. Danny is adamant that the woman should give them some milk and he returns to the farmhouse, stick in hand. Nemec condenses this second encounter with the woman to a single, harrowing shot: a close-up of Danny, mouthing a request through bloodied teeth. The director then cuts back to an exterior two-shot of the boys, sitting alongside one another at the side of the farmhouse. They have been given a cup of hot steaming milk and a couple of potatoes.



Figures 63 & 64: Danny returns to the farmhouse for milk and then eats warm potatoes with Manny outside in *Diamonds of the Night*.

Danny slowly drinks and the steam rising from the cup creates a synaesthetic affect similar to that created by Ivan's post-mission bath, a sensation of intense warmth - the (white) milk cleansing the palate of caked (black) blood. As Danny passes the cup to Manny, Nemec cuts to an (exterior) shot of the woman looking at them from a window before returning to a two-shot of the boys. Danny slowly sinks into the warm white flesh of potato and passes one to Manny. The latter drops the milk (off-screen left) and a small whiff of steam enters the frame, adding to a sense of warmth<sup>275</sup>. Manny gently mashes the potato in his hands before bringing it to his mouth. The woman is shown again, looking at the boys from a window. The young fugitives decide to leave and stagger away, Manny holding on to his friend for support. The sequence's final shot is of the woman, again at the window: she ties a black scarf around her head and then exits the frame. This *mise en abîme*, this exiting of the frame of the maternal figure (after shrouding herself in black) is highly significant. The images of purifying, restorative whiteness (the warmth of the milk and potatoes) are replaced by an almost funereal image, one of loss and great

<sup>275</sup> Hames has quite rightly linked shots of the woman lying on the floor to an early shot in Luis Bunuel's *Ensayo de un Crimen* (*The Criminal Life of Archibald De La Cruz*, 1955) but I would say that this appearance of steam/smoke from the edges of the frame also links with the latter film. Its protagonist, despite being an adult, is, like Danny, tormented by thoughts of sex and murder. In Bunuel's film, stirrings from the present lead Archibaldo back to dreams from childhood and these scenes are often presaged by smoke spilling into the frame.

foreboding. After providing sustenance to the boys, they find themselves abandoned, the implication being that the woman will now contact the authorities, as Hames observes:

‘The woman looks through the window at [the boys] and puts on a headscarf. This is a repetition of the ‘woman at the window’ motif of the fantasy flashbacks, and the scarf suggests both fate and the possibility that she may betray them.’<sup>276</sup>

As discussed earlier, the entire farmhouse sequence is pivotal in the film’s development and in my discussion of loss too, it is crucial. The images of household objects and the presence of the woman herself all serve to remind Danny of the familial shelter and domesticity he has lost and it returns him to a child-like state. Again, as with *Ivan’s Childhood* the presence of warm, milky liquid (here actual milk) links closely with the maternal, with refuge. However, unlike Ivan, images of the maternal are fused with the sexual and the violent. It will later transpire that, in informing the home guard of the boys’ whereabouts, it is indeed the woman from the barn who betrays the young fugitives. Danny’s violent urges may have therefore been in some way premonitory. The farmhouse sequence (which unfolds largely in the film’s present) is followed by the film’s most sustained and angst-ridden fragments of flashback/flashforward, a series of brief images which attempt to impart the feeling of anxiety felt by Danny, his feeling of dread. In terms of my discussion of loss, it is undoubtedly an important passage in the film, if only because it introduces another female presence, that of Danny’s girlfriend. What is significant in these scenes is that Danny is shown in continual movement, whether running for a tram, moving through empty carriages or walking along the streets of Prague. Unlike the scenes in the film’s present, he is not hindered by the injured Manny.

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<sup>276</sup> Hames, p.169

In one segment, Danny is shown to help a woman with a pram. As the camera follows the forward movement of pram's wheels, one of them drops off. There are clear echoes here of the opening dream sequence in Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* (1957) in which a funeral carriage crashes into a lamppost, spilling the coffin onto the street. Of this scene, Peter Cowie has written that:

‘The opening nightmare comes as a shocking reminder of death to [the film's elderly protagonist] Isak. He finds himself in the Old Town of Stockholm [...] When the carriage crashes into a lamppost and disgorges its casket, the axle squeals insistently, like a newborn baby, suggesting the proximity of birth and death.’<sup>277</sup>

In Nemec's film, it is a pram and not a hearse that loses a wheel but the fact that as a symbol of the future rather than a symbol of the past it is the child that is in danger,<sup>278</sup> the scene is in keeping with the foreboding nature of these flashback sequences. Shots from earlier in the film - Danny running to catch a tram, the woman at the window - are repeated and interspersed with new shots, of Danny in the company of a girlfriend, smiling, walking past two young Nazi officers, ascending and descending stairs, walking towards camera, alone, in a deserted alleyway and several shots of the boy's finger pressing a doorbell (the sound of the bell is absent). These flashbacks end with a rapid succession of static shots of closed doors inside an apartment block and a medium close-up of Danny facing one of these doors, reaching forward to press a doorbell. On this occasion, the bell rings and the sound signals a sharp cut to a wide-shot of the home guard in the forest, arranged horizontally, making their way toward camera with their rifles. These flashback shots not only look back to what Danny has lost (such as the relationship with his girlfriend) but they also look forward to – or indeed presage – the hunting down and

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<sup>277</sup> Peter Cowie, *Ingmar Bergman: A Critical Biography* (London: André Deutsch 1992) p.158

<sup>278</sup> Here there is a link too with the famous Odessa steps sequence in Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* in which a child, sitting in its pram, tumbles down the steps as the Tsarist troops open fire.

eventual capture of the boys in the film's concluding part. There is a strong sense of isolation, of the impossibility of refuge (symbolised by the succession of closed doors and Danny's unanswered ringing of doorbells).

#### **4.7 Stepping out of the Brutal Causality of War: *Come and See***

Earlier, I pointed out how - unlike *Diamonds of the Night* - Klimov's film unfolds in a comparatively linear fashion. Like *Paisan* or *Germany Year Zero*, it is close to the form of the Deleuzian bal(l)ade, a quasi-hallucinatory voyage of discovery. However, despite these obvious differences in terms of structure, in the context of my discussion of childhood loss, both Nemec and Klimov's film feature pivotal scenes in which visions of loss unfold in a domestic environment. Just as, after visiting the farmhouse, Danny is assailed by visions of extreme foreboding and the film staggers toward the ineluctable capture of the boys by the Home Guard, in *Come and See*, Klimov shows how the young protagonist's vision of loss (in his *actual* home) marks a tragic turning point in the film and signals Flor's brutalisation and loss of any remnant of childhood innocence.

Whilst comparatively little has been written on Klimov's film (especially its formal aspects), three recent interventions - by Tyrus Miller, Ian Christie and Vicky Lebeau – have examined compellingly the role and function of the film's final sequence in terms of its relation to loss. I will of course discuss these important pieces but any analysis of loss in *Come and See* must begin with the film's opening sequence, a scene which, tellingly, unfolds on a seashore. The significance of the

opening scene of Klimov's film is such that it is central to all my arguments and specifically in its representation of childhood loss and play.

The shore is presented as an area of calm, detached from areas of conflict but it is also a transitional space, symbolising the juncture between childhood and adulthood, war and peace. Klimov shows how, in the 'proximity of the mothering sea', the boys (Flor and his cousin) are free to play.<sup>279</sup> The framing and composition of the film's title sequence and movement within the frame, links with a sequence in *Diamonds of the Night*. The titles of *Come and See* take place over a static, wide shot of the shore (from the perspective of the sea looking toward land). The two boys first approach and then run away from camera, away from the shore. Here, the boys are ostensibly abandoning the comfort, the refuge of the maternal and heading toward the chaos of the paternal. This movement of the child away from camera links with the dream sequence in *Diamonds of the Night* in which Danny makes a similar rush, through the empty tram. Just as I suggested that the gaze of the camera in the latter scene could be characterised as maternal, the same point could be made about the title sequence of *Come and See*, especially unfolding as it does from the perspective of the 'mothering sea'.

Unlike the elliptical approach of Nemec's film - in which, as I have outlined, very little is known of the characters' background, especially of their families - Klimov, after the title sequence, introduces the family of his young protagonist: his mother and two young twin sisters. The purpose of this introduction is, I would suggest, to allow the viewer a full and clear conception of what Flor later tragically loses. The young boy's jesting with his sisters as his mother weeps on his departure

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<sup>279</sup> But this play (as I will discuss further in the next chapter) centres around war.

from the family home charges the later sequence (of Flor's return home) with wrenching poignancy. The boy's homecoming is preceded by an image highly redolent of maternal warmth and nurturing: the image of a stork, moving slowly through the forest, gazing back at camera.



Figures 65 & 66: A stork moves through the forest in *Come and See*.

I have discussed the role of the stork in the previous chapter but for the purposes of my discussion of childhood loss, the stork's mythical role as the deliverer of children must be outlined. Not only is the stork present in the forest scenes, but – as stated earlier - it also reappears later outside Flor's abandoned home, atop a well.<sup>280</sup>

The sequence of Flor's homecoming, like the farmhouse sequence of *Diamonds of the Night*, is central to *Come and See*. Unlike Nemec's film, it does not present a reaction to nor a recollection of, loss. Flor does not know (and then does not want to believe) the terrible fate suffered by his family. However, like *Germany Year Zero*, *Forbidden Games* and *Diamonds of the Night*, death is shown to have infiltrated the supposed shelter of domesticity. To render this 'presence of death', Klimov makes use of a highly complex, layered soundscape. Indeed, more than the image, it is

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<sup>280</sup> This later scene is highly reminiscent of a shot in *Ivan's Childhood* in which Ivan and his mother are captured peering down into a well. In *Come and See*, the stork replaces the lost figure of the mother.



sound that carries the scene's surging, inescapable air of foreboding.<sup>281</sup> Like *Diamonds of the Night*, the actual maternal figure is not physically present but is nonetheless represented in symbolic form together with the young boy's sisters. Flor's mother is present in the food she has prepared which sits, still warm, on the stove and which Flor and Glasha begin to consume. The boy's young sisters are represented by the discarded dolls which Flor's gaze (and that of the camera) is drawn to. Klimov links Flor with his sisters and with his mother (present in the the boy's moist lips from the food) in an extraordinary passage of shot-reverse-shot (a close-up of Flor, a POV shot of the dolls) all the while accompanied by the insistent, heightened buzzing of flies. Flor then rushes outside, to a water well, upon which is perched a stork (again representing the maternal figure).



Figures 67 & 68: Flor looks down a well upon which perches a stork in *Come and See*.

Throughout *Come and See*, Klimov certainly does not shy away from explicitly showing the horrific images of Nazi atrocities but the *actual* murder of Flor's family is not explicitly shown. There is a sense that, even in a film which often stretches the limits of the bearable, such scenes would veer into exploitation. Furthermore, Klimov is interested in the *experience* of Flor and therefore such scenes would be

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<sup>281</sup> I have discussed this scene's use of sound in detail in my earlier chapter on the child as seer and hearer.

gratuitous. As with other films in my corpus, the film's diegetic present is shown to retain the suffocating stench of the (recent) past and this in itself is at the very limits of bearability.

The rest of *Come and See*, after this sequence, is essentially concerned with Flor and his attempts to deal with the loss of his family whilst continuing to experience the murderous chaos of the occupiers. The inability to mourn and unrelenting visions of horror he is subjected to would appear to render the psychoanalytic mourning reactions I outlined earlier in the chapter of little relevance here. After all, Flor is shown to have little time to reflect, to consider the consequences of his loss before he is confronted with overwhelming further sights and sounds of war. Flor is swept up in a tide which cannot be arrested.<sup>282</sup>

Unfolding in the smouldering aftermath, amongst the ashes of Nazi genocide and bloodthirsty partisan reprisals, the film's final sequence provides a complex, compelling end to the film by projecting the viewer backwards, bursting out of the film's diegetic world and returning to an image of Hitler as a child. Flor, left alone and visibly, terribly, aged comes across a portrait of Hitler in a puddle. Loading his rifle, he discharges several rounds into the frame. As he does so, Klimov inserts documentary footage of the war, going backwards in time, and cuts back and forth from Flor firing angrily in the film's diegesis to the extra-diegetic war footage. This reverse motion newsreel footage stretches back to the beginning of the war, to the Nazi ascension to power and finally, to an image of Hitler in his mother's arms. Tyrus Miller, Ian Christie and Vicky Lebeau have all offered fascinating insights into this final scene, Christie observing that the its use of reverse motion 'serves an

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<sup>282</sup> For example, no sooner has Flor come to the realisation that his family has been murdered that he is confronted, at an encampment of refugees, by his dying uncle (from the opening beach sequence) who has been fatally burned.

altogether more 'serious' purpose than in any film since [Eisenstein's] *October*<sup>283</sup>.

Writing about the temporal progression in Klimov's film as a whole, Miller writes:

'Despite the relatively straightforward 'realist' narrative succession, there is a strongly accented dissonance between the objective time-span and the character's subjective experience of it. Only a few days pass in the film yet Flor passes from boyhood to a kind of premature old age in that brief span.'<sup>284</sup>

This stepping out of the film from its relentless forward trajectory recalls François Vallet's previously-cited observation regarding the child in neorealism. 'It is as if the (adult) world', Vallet argues, 'has talked too much, has confused and complicated the sense of things.'<sup>285</sup> The structure of Klimov's film, which has up to this final scene sought to convey the trauma of war through its child protagonist suffers a rupture. As Christie rightly suggests, this represents 'a way of stepping outside the brutal causality of [Flor's] limited perception of his corner of the war.'<sup>286</sup> But herein lies the scene's complexity. Klimov does not simply move beyond his protagonist to add a (damning, polemical) authorial postscript. The scene *involves* Flor and he is shown to react to an image he has not physically seen. At the beginning of the newsreel inserts, it appears to be a simple question of shifting from diegetic (Flor firing at the portrait) and extra-diegetic (the newsreels), however, with the final insert of a baby Hitler in his mother's arms, Klimov blurs this boundary. Flor still has at his feet the familiar, sinister image of the adult Hitler but he stops firing, reacting to an apparently extra-diegetic image. Vicky Lebeau explains that 'to shoot and shatter the portrait of the adult Hitler is, it seems, to do a quasi-magical violence to the man [...]' Unleashing aggression against the man [...] Flor, like the film, is brought up short by

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<sup>283</sup> Ian Christie, 'Time Regained: The complex magic of reverse motion' in Sabbadini (ed), p.173

<sup>284</sup> Miller, pp.226 - 227

<sup>285</sup> Vallet, p.119

<sup>286</sup> Christie, p. 174

the image of a child, the infant, the sacred origin of the self.<sup>287</sup> The fact that Flor fires continually at the portrait offers an insight into his incredibly debilitated mental and physical state. His feelings move from pure hate (directed at the source of the carnage he has witnessed, and losses he has suffered) to a deeper reflection. His gazing at the portrait, the repetition of the action of shooting again recalls the mental confusion of Danny in the farmhouse sequence of *Diamonds of the Night*. Danny, just like Flor – and in spite of his violent impulses – is incapable of inflicting violence on a maternal figure. The image of baby Hitler in the arms of his mother naturally reminds Flor of the loss of his own mother but it also reminds the viewer that despite his/her repugnancy at Nazi atrocities, there must necessarily be a limit. Lebeau writes that ‘as if discovering the limit of killing in that image of a child, Flor stops – like the documentary footage that, playing in reverse, comes to a rest, too, in the fatality of this image.’<sup>288</sup> A film which, for much of its duration, tests the limits of bearability, this final shot, this final image of child killing child - even if it is child Hitler - is impossible. Klimov appears to admit that even if the killing of child Hitler might have saved the world from the horrors wreaked by his regime, this single act would be unbearable.

#### 4.8 Conclusion

Whereas my first two chapters focused on the child’s relation to the world around him - to other adults and the landscape – this current chapter and the following on play focus on the child’s psychological states. In my study of childhood loss, I have

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<sup>287</sup> Lebeau, p. 147

<sup>288</sup> *ibid.* p.174

drawn on psychoanalytic theory in an attempt to probe into the respective directors' rendering of loss in their young protagonists. Crucial in this study is the presence of water which, in these films, often comes to represent that which the child has lost. Although water as an elemental symbol is of course, deeply ambivalent, I have found that in my corpus of films, it is on the whole a positive presence, linking closely to the maternal. As highlighted by Jeremy Mark Robinson, water has special significance in the work of Tarkovsky and, in *Ivan's Childhood*, it is present in both spatio-temporal spheres. I would agree with Andrea Truppin who has highlighted how water, in Tarkovsky's films, allows for the 'shifting of hierarchy' between dream and reality, past and present. I have drawn clear links between *Ivan's Childhood* and the poetry of Rabindranth Tagore, in particular, a collection of child poems called *The Crescent Moon*. For Tagore, as for Tarkovsky, 'separateness is pain'.

In Nemec's *Diamonds of the Night*, I have suggested that for the fugitive boy, images of what he has lost (shelter, a maternal figure, lost love) haunt him throughout, including an extraordinary sequence at a farmhouse, which I examined in detail. Klimov's *Come and See* similarly turns on a moment of tragic loss. The murder of Flor's family marks a critical moment in Flor's experience. Up to this shocking discovery, the boy had retained some of the vestiges of childhood. From this point onwards, he is drawn ineluctably into the horrors of Nazi occupation, climaxing in his witnessing of the massacre of an entire village. In the aftermath of this genocidal horror, having survived only by chance, Flor encounters an image of Hitler and proceeds to fire into it. It is a scene which marks a leap out of the brutal causality of Flor's experience with Klimov utilising reverse motion to return to an

image of Hitler as a baby. Flor, however brutalised by war, cannot bring himself to murder another child – even the infant Hitler.

## 5. Childhood Play

‘I recognised that when a child is inspired to play because of a terrible event, the play tends to be frightening to the child, yet at the same time, irresistible.’

Lenore Terr, *Beyond Love and Work* (1999)

J.A. Hadfield, in his seminal 1962 work *Childhood and Adolescence*, discusses the nature and function of play. Play, he argues, is ‘needful to the soul of the child. [It is] nature’s method of giving a child practice in those activities which he will later acquire in earnest.’<sup>289</sup> To illustrate his point, the author uses an example of the peasant child forced to work on the croft. Even after a draining day’s work, he argues, the child will still find time to play, so vital is play to mental health.

In the previous three chapters, I have discussed the impact of war on the figure of the child: the child as witness, the child in relation to landscape and the child’s experience of loss. I have argued that these invasions of childhood by the adult world of conflict forces the child to absorb facts and events which he/she is seldom equipped for, physically or emotionally. In this harsh landscape of war, the figure of the child is an incongruous one and therefore the child at play may appear even more so. The apparent frivolity of child’s play is at odds with the horrors of adult conflict but how else can the child be expected to make sense of a world created for them by adults over which they have no control?

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<sup>289</sup> J. A. Hadfield, *Childhood and Adolescence* (London: Penguin 1962) pp.171 - 174

In *Witnesses of War: Children's Lives Under the Nazis*, Nicholas Stargardt outlines several episodes of childhood play during the Nazi occupation. One of the most striking of these takes place in a Lithuanian ghetto:

‘Once children in the Vilna ghetto learned the meaning of the words ‘action’, ‘death transport’, ‘Nazi’, ‘SS-man’, ‘bunker’ and ‘partisan’, they began to transpose them into their games. They would play at ‘actions’, ‘blowing up bunkers’, ‘slaughtering’ and ‘seizing the clothes of the dead.’<sup>290</sup>

Stargardt notes how children vied, not to be their elders, but their enemies, that the main ‘roles’ in children’s re-enactments were Gestapo men or gate guards:

‘These [...] children’s games had a profoundly ambivalent character [...] testifying to the envy and longing with which children might regard the enemies they most hated [However], these children were also playing, turning what they most feared into the stuff of games.’<sup>291</sup>

The six works in my corpus – despite being set in territories under foreign occupation - all differ in their representation of play. As with the subjects of previous chapters, the question must be asked as to why the medium of film might be particularly suited for an exploration of childhood play and whether, like loss, play is present in diegetic or extra-diegetic form.

The parallels between film and childhood play are of course several. Just as the films themselves are pieces of fiction, conceived and directed by a filmmaker, so too the child, through play, becomes a director of his own drama. Through the creation of an artwork, the director and the child probe into - and attempt to come to terms with - external events. The centrality of repetition is another important parallel, the fact that an event can be played and replayed, yielding new meaning upon each

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<sup>290</sup> Nicholas Stargardt, *Witnesses of War: Children's Lives under the Nazis* (London: Pimlico 2006), p. 174 Earlier in his study, Stargardt argues that during the Occupation, children learned the meaning of fear through the sudden impotence of the adults who had seemed so powerful to them. (p.114) His observation on children’s ‘vying to be their enemies’ appears most clearly in the opening sequence of *Come and See*, which will be discussed in detail later in the chapter.

<sup>291</sup> *ibid*, p. 175



viewing. Both play and film are processes in which events are worked and re-worked.

Again, as for loss, how does play actually manifest itself in these films? Through form or content? That is to say, is play present in physical form in the film's diegesis or is it rather present through a structure which subverts classical narrative, disrupting the film's 'showing'. With the exception of perhaps *Forbidden Games*, the answer would have to be both: form *and* content. The diegetic manifestations of play in the films work together with several of the films' non-classical, often non-linear structures: the bal(l)ades of *Paisan* or *Germany Year Zero*, the modernist structures of *Ivan's Childhood* and *Diamonds of the Night*, the traumatic, neo-expressionist odyssey of *Come and See*. Lury rightly observes that:

'The child's presence and the child's actions serve to remind us of this 'trick' of cinema, and often interrupt the controlling discourse of the film's showing by recalling the pleasures and fears of seeing.'<sup>292</sup>

*Forbidden Games* is an exception in this sense because it is, in terms of form, the most classical. In Clément's film, there appears to be more of a measured distance between the director's drama and that of the child. Unlike the other works however, *Forbidden Games* is the only film in which childhood play is *the* dominant theme, the topic of the narrative. It is also the only film in which the world of childhood play significantly affects relations in the world of adults. Unlike the other works, this adult invasion of childhood results in the child's invasion of adulthood. However, while the child is undoubtedly a disruptive agent in *Forbidden Games*, this disruption does not affect the film's structure in a way which is perhaps more evident

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<sup>292</sup> Karen Lury, 'The Child in Film and Television: Introduction' in *Screen* (Volume 46, No. 3, Autumn 2005) p. 309

in the other works. Play in *Forbidden Games* therefore is a strictly diegetic presence unlike the other works in which play is manifested in both diegetic and extra-diegetic forms.

Before textual analysis of play in the films themselves, it will be useful to discuss recent interventions in the studies of childhood play. This chapter will draw on Freudian and post-Freudian theory, including the influential writings of D.W. Winnicott and Lenore Terr's theory of 'post-traumatic child's play'. The 1980 article in which Terr coined this term is actually inspired by Clément's film (and Francois Boyer's source novel), the author arguing that it is 'the most remarkable literary example of post-traumatic play I have found.'<sup>293</sup>

### 5.1. The Meanings of Play

Eugene J. Mahon has made intriguing etymological observations on the word 'play'. The modern definition of the word as 'games, as diversion', he points out, is far from the word's source. In old English, *plega* meant 'to strike a blow':

'How etymology shifts the meaning of a deadly earnest word used to describe war-like activity to the totally new sense that implies action as 'only playing', so to speak, is one of the ironies of the history of the language.'<sup>294</sup>

The source of the word 'play' therefore had confrontational, violent connotations. These connotations are still present and characterise much of the play of the child characters in my corpus of films. The emphasis is on mastery -of an event, an experience - that in reality, the child has no control over.

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<sup>293</sup> Lenore C. Terr, 'Forbidden Games: Post-Traumatic Child's Play' in *The Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry*, 20, 1981, p.742

<sup>294</sup> Eugene J. Mahon, 'Play: Its Role in Child Analysis, Its Fate in Adult Analysis' in Albert J. Solnit, Donald J. Cohen, Peter B. Neubauer (eds), *The Many Meanings of Play: A Psychoanalytic Perspective* (London: Yale University Press 1993) p. 174

In their overview of psychoanalytical studies of childhood play, Steven Marans, Linda C. Mayes and Alice B. Colonna suggest that many of Freud's descriptions and formulations about play phenomena have remained central in post-Freudian studies. The work of Melanie Klein, Robert Waelder, Anna Freud and Erik Erikson both build on and modify the formulations laid out by Freud:

‘The function of child's play was [according to Freud], an example of a natural inclination toward a ‘revolt against passivity and a preference for the active role’ in the service of practicing and assuming greater self-sufficiency (1931).’<sup>295</sup>

Freud argued that, in the case of older children, reality is not disavowed but rather suspended in the service of re-working unpleasurable experiences. Such re-working is achieved by the child's reversing of their original role of frightened, passive victim into an *active, masterful role*. Alongside this desire for mastery, Freud emphasised that another driving force underlying children's play was a compulsion to repeat. This aspect is further elaborated by Waelder, who, in 1932, argued that:

‘Play may now be characterised as a method of constantly working over and, as it were, assimilating piecemeal an experience which was too large to be assimilated instantly at one swoop.’<sup>296</sup>

Waelder was not only one of the first psychoanalysts to examine the child's vulnerability to trauma but was also one of the first to acknowledge the function of play in assimilating experiences that are for the child, overwhelming. From Waelder's perspective, the child pulls apart traumatic experience only to reassemble it in a form that is more easily mastered.

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<sup>295</sup> Steven Marans, Linda C. Mayes, Alice B. Colonna, ‘Psychoanalytic Views of Child's Play’ in Solnit, Cohen and Neubauer, p. 11

<sup>296</sup> *ibid*, p.12 This focus on the repetitive qualities of play is relevant to many of the films in my corpus but in particular in *Diamonds of the Night* where images are repeated by Nemec in an attempt to replicate the anxiety-riven state of mind of his young character. Interestingly, and as I have pointed out earlier, this repetition of scenes was heavily criticised by some contemporary critics such as Moullet but also (rightly) praised by others such as Benayoun.

Anna Freud views play activities as being able to yield important information about the developmental status of the child. She emphasises that play is a useful window on the child's inner grappling with conflicts generated from both internal and external reality. Once again there is through play, an attempt on the part of the child to master his/her surroundings.

In 1959, Phyllis Greenacre observed that the child's repetition of themes in play represents 'their attempt to verify the difference between fantasy and reality until familiarity with that difference has been adequately established for each of these significant themes. Play is a central activity for *testing reality*.'<sup>297</sup> On the subject of trauma<sup>298</sup>, Greenacre argues that the 'mastering of trauma' is never complete and that:

'[...] the fun of play derives from the persisting affects and tensions associated with the original traumatic experiences. The greatest relief from the effects of trauma is afforded by a combination of the child's ability to separate fantasy and reality through play and, through that separation, to deal with the traumatic situation successfully.'<sup>299</sup>

For D.W. Winnicott, play reflects the child's capacity to occupy a 'transitional space' between psychic and external reality in which the child uses elements from both domains to establish a sense of self. Some of the essential functions of play include a mastery of instinctual life, an adaptation to current and internalised demands and expectations of others, the resolution of conflicts and practicing and extending motoric, linguistic and cognitive skills acquired in the course of

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<sup>297</sup> *ibid*, p.14 (My italics)

<sup>298</sup> There is of course, an extensive literature on literature and trauma, including works by Cathy Caruth, Dominick LaCapra, Janet Walker, Barbie Zelizer and others. However, these studies do not relate directly to the figure of the child and are concerned primarily with the Holocaust. For the purposes of my study, the works of Terr and Winnicott are more relevant, given that they place the child at the very centre of their investigations.

<sup>299</sup> *ibid*. p.15

maturation.<sup>300</sup> In her 2005 article ‘Thresholds: Film As Film and the Aesthetic Experience’ Annette Kuhn discusses the concept of the Winnicottian transitional object, focusing on three films with child characters, Alexander Mackenrick’s *Mandy* (1952), Terence Davies’ *Distant Voices, Still Lives* (1988) and Lynne Ramsay’s *Ratcatcher* (1999). Released in the same year as *Forbidden Games*, *Mandy* is a family drama made by Ealing Studios focusing on the life of a young deaf girl and her parents’ attempts to come to terms with her condition. Set in post-war London, the film features an area of wasteground (a bombsite) behind Mandy’s family home. Kuhn argues that the sequences set in this area represent ‘a working over of the human quest to relate outer and inner realities.’<sup>301</sup> In an earlier article – ‘Mandy and Possibility’ – Kuhn refers to the wasteground as being ‘associated with Mandy’s personal struggle against isolation and loneliness: but its connotations also reach outward to embrace issues concerning what it is to be a child – not only at a particular moment in history, but in general.’<sup>302</sup> Links can be made between Mackendrick’s bombed-out space of play in *Mandy* and the bombed out arenas of play in my corpus of films, most notably in *Paisan*, *Germany Year Zero* but perhaps the closest links are with *Forbidden Games* given that the child characters are similar in age and that both have to struggle against loneliness and abandonment.

Lenore Terr has written widely on the subject of childhood trauma, building on both Freud and post-Freudians in works such as *Too Scared To Cry: Psychic Trauma in Childhood* (1990) and articles such as ‘Forbidden Games: Post-Traumatic Child’s

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<sup>300</sup> *ibid*, p.16

<sup>301</sup> Annette Kuhn, ‘Thresholds: Film as Film and the Aesthetic Experience’, *Screen*, Volume 46, Number 4 (2005), p.412

<sup>302</sup> Kuhn, ‘Mandy and Possibility’, *Screen*, Volume 33, Number 3 (1991), p. 241

Play' (1981). In the latter, Terr defines psychic trauma as '[...] the injury to the personality that occurs when sudden, intense, unexpected anxiety overwhelms the individual's abilities to cope and to defend.'<sup>303</sup> She outlines several characteristics of post-traumatic play including compulsive repetitiveness and 'contagion' of such play to new generations of children. In both works, but especially in *Too Scared to Cry*<sup>304</sup>, Terr stresses the importance of differentiating between ordinary play and post-traumatic play. Earlier, I discussed how classic psychoanalytic approaches to play focus on the child's success in his/her quest for mastery, the movement from passive victim to active mastery. Terr argues that whilst this may be true for 'normal play', it is not the case for play that is post-traumatic - despite continued efforts on the part of the child. In normal play, abreaction occurs, and the child is able to diminish anxiety after a few play episodes but for the psychically traumatised child, anxiety cannot be minimised by play. Despite the child's desperate attempts to employ ordinary play - 'the mechanism that had always worked before' - he finds himself unable to succeed, unable to master. Amongst other factors, Terr attributes this floundering on the part of the child to a failure in forming full identification in post-traumatic play:

'The well-meaning child cannot fully or happily identify with criminals [but also] cannot identify with other helpless victims or onlookers [...] The villains are too malicious [...] and the helpers are too ineffective.'<sup>305</sup>

The child nonetheless continues to play, the psyche desperately attempting to recreate the success of previous play. This repeated play becomes post-traumatic:

'The traumatic situation was real and ended badly (overwhelming the child's capacity to cope). The play creates anxiety because it almost literally recreates the traumatic event. The more the play fails, the more anxiety is

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<sup>303</sup> Terr, 'Forbidden Games: Post-Traumatic Child's Play', p.741

<sup>304</sup> Terr's book was begun studying the victims of the kidnapping in 1976 of 26 children in California. The children were kidnapped and then buried alive for motives never explained. However, all the children survived.

<sup>305</sup> *ibid*, p.756

generated because the child perceives that he/she cannot find effective mechanisms to deal with the trauma even in retrospect.<sup>306</sup>

In contrast - as Marans, Mayes and Colonna have discussed - essential to 'ordinary play' is the creation on the child's part of a narrative over which he/she exercises *complete directorial control*:

'Essential [to this] control of narrative action is the confidence that however closely the action approximates real events or however intense it becomes, the action of the characters in play is not and does not need to be real.'<sup>307</sup>

The authors here attribute directorial status to children playing 'normally' but in post-traumatic play, this type of control is problematic, if not impossible to achieve. As I have already suggested in my chapter on the child as witness, the child's attempts to control his/her situation are often undermined by their motor-helplessness. But of course, what are the dream sequences in *Ivan's Childhood*, the feverish flashbacks in *Diamonds of the Night* and, most spectacularly, Paulette's macabre play in *Forbidden Games* if not the characters' attempt to construct, to *direct* their own drama in the face of a reality too hostile to bear.

## **5.2. *Paisan*, *Germany Year Zero*: The Impossibility of Childhood Play**

In *Childhood and Society*, Erik Erikson observes that when man plays, he does not work, 'he must intermingle with things and people in an uninvolved and light fashion [...] on vacation from social and economic reality.'<sup>308</sup> However, the author suggests that the playing *child* poses a problem - for 'whoever does not work shall not play':

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<sup>306</sup> *ibid.* p.757

<sup>307</sup> *ibid.* p.18

<sup>308</sup> Erik Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (London: Penguin 1967) p.204

‘To be tolerant of the child’s play, the adult must invent theories which show that either childhood play is really work – or that it does not count.’<sup>309</sup>

In the opening scenes of Rossellini’s *Paisan*, is the child engaged in work or in play? Does he ‘play at being an adult’? Does he play at all? What of the character’s relationship with the adult? *Paisan* is an interesting case because, rather than the child playing, it is the adult character who can be said to engage in ‘play’ in the conventional sense (although admittedly in a state of inebriation). In relation to the actions of the American GI Joe, therefore, Erikson’s observations are undoubtedly accurate.

Analysis of the movement of Pasquale in the episode’s opening minutes, it would appear that, despite the fantastical images of fire-eaters and acrobats, he is not engaged in any form of play. Pasquale is here engaged in *work* – the procurement of money – yet he is ‘playing at being an adult’. He is clearly attempting to master his situation and is an active figure. This links back to and reaffirms my earlier suggestions on the child’s oscillation between passivity and activity. Outwardly, he is undoubtedly a marginalised figure, but through his actions he would appear to have an altogether different status. Whilst certainly not aided by his environment, he has a conspicuous inner drive which is especially in evidence early in the episode.

Surprisingly few observers have noted the many references in the Naples episode of *Paisan* to both adult and child’s play. In *Childhood and Society*, Erikson has argued that comparing these phenomena is ultimately futile:

‘the adult is a commodity-producing and commodity-exchanging being whereas the child is only preparing to become one. To the working adult, play is recreation. It permits a periodical stepping out from those forms of defined limitation which are his social reality.’<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> *ibid.*, p.

<sup>310</sup> *ibid.*, p. 205



Joe ‘steps out from defined limitation’ through his drinking, crossing paths with Pasquale who sees in the American GI an opportunity for profit. The pair drop into a performance of a puppet play during which Joe drunkenly mounts the stage to the consternation of the puppeteers. With this action, Joe not only flaunts his own state of freedom and liberty to play, he disturbs those who are engaged in work.

As I have pointed out, play often functions as a bridge between fantasy and reality (a *transitional* space, to put it in Winnicottian terms) and there are many examples of such spaces throughout my corpus (from the bridge at the beginning of *Forbidden Games* to the trams that populate the flashbacks of the protagonist of *Diamonds of the Night*). Pasquale and Joe, sitting atop a pile of rubble surveying a liberated Naples, also occupy a form of transitional space. In a previous chapter, I discussed how the conventional adult-child, passive-active roles are reversed in this sequence. Following on from this - and in terms of my discussion of play - what is particularly interesting is how, rather than the adult sympathetically listening to the child’s flights of fancy, it is Pasquale, the child, who listens to the adult. It would appear that, even though much of Joe’s drunken reverie is ultimately lost on Pasquale, (given the characters’ very limited knowledge of the other’s language), the pair appear to communicate best through play. Pasquale understands that Joe is talking about a plane because the latter extends his arms, making all the concomitant noises – ‘A plane!’, the young boy exclaims. Joe then invites Pasquale into his imagined utopia of the returning soldier. This *drawing in* of others, of course, is a key characteristic of Terr’s theory of post-traumatic play.<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> Despite focusing on children, Terr’s 1981 article also studies the play of a traumatised adult, 26 year-old Matthew. In considering his case, Terr concludes that ‘it is evident that post-traumatic play extends to a wider age range than does ordinary play’.



Figure 69: Joe ‘plays’ with Pasquale atop a mound of rubble in *Paisan*.

‘I don’t want to play no more, paisan’ Joe says after puncturing his own dream. If play is, as Erikson has observed, a ‘stepping out’ from social reality - Joe finds himself plunged straight back into his real situation, his real surroundings, his real future. As Marans, Mayes and Colonna observe, ‘the opposite of play is not what is serious but what is real.’<sup>312</sup> This unwanted return to reality, this deflating end to play, is emphasised when Pasquale warns him that if he falls asleep, he will steal his shoes.

There is no other character in my corpus of films that is as continuously and cruelly barred from play as Edmund in *Germany Year Zero*. In the film’s opening sequence - as in the Naples episode of *Paisan* - Rossellini once again presents a child ‘playing at being an adult’. As the women around him dig graves, Edmund himself only ‘plays’ at digging. By highlighting his protagonist’s palpable lack of strength for such a task, Rossellini emphasises Edmund’s fragility. It is also an example of an

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<sup>312</sup> Marans, Mayes and Colonna, p. 18

association that will be more fully explored in *Forbidden Games*; that is to say, the links between play and death.

In a later episode from the film, Edmund meets his former schoolteacher Enning. Before the latter's arrival, Edmund is shown to circle a statue upon which a group of children are engaged in play. When Enning arrives, Rossellini arranges both characters in a tight two-shot, whilst behind them, the children continue playing. Composed in depth, action in this shot is shown to take place on two distinct planes – the carefree, childhood plane and the deviant adult plane.



Figures 70 & 71: Edmund encounters Enning as children play behind them in *Germany Year Zero*.

Admittedly, even before the arrival of Enning, Edmund had shown no intimation of joining the children's play but he will certainly do so later in the film when he interrupts a group of children playing football. With the teacher's arrival, the chasm between Edmund and normal childhood play continues to widen. Rossellini's framing and the restlessness of the camera in this sequence is significant. Keeping the playing children in the foreground, it almost appears as if the camera yearns to join them.

As I suggested earlier, Edmund, more than any of the other child characters in my corpus, is crippled by his inability to play. This play, so ‘needful to the soul’, as Hadfield has suggested, is continually denied him and, if much of ordinary play is indeed ‘a working out of problems which [the child cannot] otherwise solve in his own mind’<sup>313</sup>, the roots of Edmund’s act of patricide are all too evident.

After poisoning his father, Edmund once again takes to the streets. Rossellini shows explicitly how Edmund’s ties with humanity are severed as, firstly, he is humiliated by a group of boys and then chastised by an (inexplicably) outraged Enning. The most pitiful image is however one which, again, delineates Edmund’s barring from play. He encounters a group of children playing football, asks to join in but is told he cannot. There is a strong sense of Edmund trying desperately to engage with a childhood he has lost. One of the children picks up the ball and leads the others away, out of shot. The camera remains on Edmund, before him the devastated landscape of Berlin. ‘Edmund’ as François Vallet has written, ‘is a stranger in the country of childhood.’<sup>314</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> Hadfield, *Childhood and Adolescence*, p.175

<sup>314</sup> ‘Il est [un] étranger au pays de l’enfance’, François Vallet, *L’image de l’enfant au cinéma*, p.177



Figure 72: Edmund is rejected by children playing football in *Germany Year Zero*.

The film's desperate coda shows how, unable to contain his need for play, Edmund, after his final exclusion from playing with other children, engages in solitary play. After these final exchanges with humanity (his family, Enning, fellow children), Edmund is shown to withdraw into his own world. Rossellini's camera once again follows Edmund as he takes to the streets. Crucially, the scene takes place at dusk – that is to say, during another period of *transition*. The playing of a church organ can be heard in the distance, a requiem not only for father but also presaging the demise of the son. Terr has argued that:

‘In ordinary play, it is easy to be someone else, but in post-traumatic play, no full ‘pretend’ identification is possible, and it may be that, for this reason, no elaborate defence mechanisms can be employed. Unable to ‘be’ someone else in play, the child cannot gain enough emotional distance from the traumatic event. Anxiety is generated when there is failure of distancing, and then the play aggravates rather than soothes the post-traumatic condition.’<sup>315</sup>

As Terr has outlined, ‘ordinary play’ is characterised by ‘happy endings’ but with post-traumatic play, there is no such possibility and the child is all too aware of this

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<sup>315</sup> Terr (1981) p. 756

fact: ‘play mechanisms are inadequate to dissipate the anxiety.’<sup>316</sup> After attempting repeatedly to engage in play, Edmund finds that it is ultimately of no use in relieving his anxiety and guilt. The boy’s final act of play shows him slide down a collapsed metal girder onto the floor below. Again, the links with *Ivan’s Childhood* are particularly evident as, in the final sequence of Tarkovsky’s film, Ivan too (in the form of a photograph) slips through a hole in the floor of a devastated building. In *Germany Year Zero*, this slide, this descent signals the definitive end of childhood and presages Edmund’s final ‘descent’.

### **5.3 Forbidden Games: Contaminant Quality of Post-Traumatic Play**

As I have already touched upon, Lenore Terr’s theory of post-traumatic play, according to the author, finds its most acute literary and cinematic representation in the 1950 novel by François Boyer and in the 1952 film adaptation by René Clément. In *Too Scared To Cry*, Terr writes:

‘Boyer and Clément, French observers of World War II, had put to fictional form a ‘new’ psychiatric phenomenon. The novelist and the filmmaker were accurately depicting a secret, dangerous, monotonous, ghoulish, unconsciously connected kind of routine that follows from childhood trauma.’<sup>317</sup>

Of all the child characters in my corpus, none have the drive, or hunger for ‘directorial control of the narrative action’<sup>318</sup> of play as 5 year-old Paulette. This has been a factor hitherto relatively unexplored in writings on Clément’s film – the fact that Paulette essentially becomes the (often highly demanding) director of her own drama, with 12 year-old Michel as her long-suffering cohort. It does however echo

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<sup>316</sup> *ibid.* p.756

<sup>317</sup> Terr, *Too Scared To Cry*, p.242

<sup>318</sup> Marans, Mayes and Colonna, p.18

André Farwagi's previously quoted observation that, in Clément's films, the world arranges itself around the characters:

'With the suspension of reality, the child is able to enact a preferred, active role in the recreation of an experience of passivity or enact derivatives of instinctual wishes that would otherwise be repudiated by the superego or invite potentially dangerous consequences from the real world.'<sup>319</sup>

Despite Michel's comparatively subservient role, it is he in fact who instigates and, in a sense, continually fuels, Paulette's obsessive desire, acting almost as a fixer for his new-found friend. When she asks to go and find her mother and father on the bridge, Michel replies that they are no longer there – they are in a hole – and this comment unwittingly serves as the spark which ignites Paulette's imagination.

The lifeless body of her dead dog serves as a Winnicottian transitional object for Paulette. In *Playing and Reality*, Winnicott suggests that the pattern of transitional phenomena begins to show during infancy but that these patterns persist into childhood', that 'a need for a specific object or a behaviour pattern that started at a very early date may reappear at a later age when deprivation threatens.'<sup>320</sup> Unable to bury her parents, to 'protect them from the rain', Paulette thus decides to bury her dog. Like Rossellini in *Germany Year Zero* – and as discussed in my earlier chapter on landscape – Clément quickly emphasises how ill-suited his child protagonist is to the reality of war (of death, of burial). Holding her lifeless dog in one hand and dragging a pick-axe in the other, Clément presents her in a wide shot, striding purposefully away from camera, dwarfed by a central image of a disused, empty house looming in front of her. Michel arrives just as Paulette begins digging and asks her what she is doing. Despite her brusque reply, he offers to help her make a little

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<sup>319</sup> *ibid.*, p.18

<sup>320</sup> D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Routledge 2006) p. 6

cemetery. Clément emphasises the young girl's complete ignorance of death by the fact that she does not even know what a cemetery is.

Terr has suggested that 'because of the enormous reservoir of anxiety lying behind it, post-traumatic play can pull in non-traumatised youngsters as well as those suffering from traumatic anxiety' and we can clearly see this developing between Paulette and Michel. However, the relationship is by no means so clearly defined – it is certainly far more symbiotic. Of course, Paulette *does* pull Michel into her post-traumatic play, but Michel, who is older and has had to work from a young age, fuels - consciously or otherwise - Paulette's urges (In his first scenes, Clément shows the young boy rearing animals, adult-like, on the family farm). Whether it is through a desire to impress his traumatised friend or to assuage her grief, it is his actions and explanations that drive the play forward.

Michel, having been 'contaminated' by Paulette, becomes obsessed with obtaining crosses to adorn their cemetery and this unquenchable desire, rather than remaining amongst the children, spreads further, affecting the relations between the film's adult characters, specifically the warring neighbours, the Dollés and the Gouards. To cover up his activities, Michel tells his father that it was the Gouards that stole the crosses from his brother's hearse. This contagious quality, the sheer pull of Paulette's post-traumatic play of course links back to my discussion of the film's quasi-gothic mise en scene in my chapter on landscape. The arrival of Paulette into the Dollé household does indeed disturb relations both within the family and, most spectacularly, with the neighbouring Gouards but to endow Paulette with vampiric qualities is excessive. Of all the child characters in my corpus, she is undoubtedly the most disruptive but the



contaminant quality of play is crucial to an understanding of Paulette's affect on the adult world into which she is plunged.

At the farm, the children decide to make name plates to accompany their crosses whilst the adults are seated around the table discussing the neighbours' son. Clément's camera tracks down from the table and settles on a two-shot of the children laying side-by-side on their stomachs facing camera. Paulette spots a cockroach crawling slowly alongside them. Michel pretends his pen is a bomber, swirls it in the air and then brings it down to skewer the insect. Paulette is outraged, 'You shouldn't kill them!' Her reaction is significant in that for the first time, Michel, rather than simply gathering dead animals, actually kills one in front of her – the illusion of play is shattered by this killing of a living creature and Paulette is of course reminded of her parents. Michel, perplexed by her reaction, replies 'It's not me, it's a bomb – are you crazy?' pointing out that 'they have to be dead to bury them. As Terr has observed, 'anxiety is generated when there is failure of distancing and the play *aggravates rather than soothes* the post-traumatic condition.'<sup>321</sup> For the first time, Michel here starts to *actually kill* in the name of his and Paulette's play.

Although Paulette and Michel's play does not impact on the structure of *Forbidden Games*, Paulette's arrival to the Dollé farm has severe implications not only for Michel but also for the family's adults and their relationship with the neighbouring family. Despite making it clear that Paulette and Michel's play impacts severely on the adults, Clément's position is one of little sympathy given that it is the adult world which has denied Paulette and Michel a normal childhood. The film's

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<sup>321</sup> Terr, 'Forbidden Games: Post-Traumatic Child's Play', p.756 (my italics)

final scenes function as a devastating condemnation of the adult world, one which has cruelly betrayed the child.

Michel's stealing of crosses leads to a confrontation between the warring families at the cemetery and the gruesome sight of the two heads of family fighting in an open grave. The allusion is clear: the two warring families serve as a microcosm of warring nations mired in a conflict which shows little sign of resolution. This link between warring nations and warring families is a point touched upon by Reinhard Kuhn:

‘It is not only through warfare or oppressive social institutions that adults have deprived children of what is often assumed to be their natural right to a carefree existence [...] there is another type of misery that, though less dramatic, is equally profound. This is the wretchedness that festers within the smallest unit of our society, the family.’<sup>322</sup>

Whilst the ‘adult’ cemetery is left in ruins, the ‘child’ cemetery – as outlined in previous chapters - is fully constructed. Tyrus Miller, in his article ‘The Burning Babe: Children, Film Narrative and the Figures of Historical Witness’, argues that Paulette and Michel’s ‘play with death is a source of vitality, joy and love in the face of inexplicable fate and violence [...] their loving co-operation in a kind of shared artwork against death.’<sup>323</sup> Whilst I would agree with Miller, I would argue whether the relationship between the children is as overwhelmingly harmonious as he claims. Michel does fuel Paulette’s urges but one only has to count Michel’s frequent laments over his friend’s importunance (‘You’re never satisfied’, ‘You’re so hard to please’) to understand that he often reluctant. Miller is undoubtedly right however when he observes that ‘their morbid game represented a living relation between [the

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<sup>322</sup> Kuhn, pp. 91 - 92

<sup>323</sup> Miller, p.216

children]’<sup>324</sup> and the fact that he calls the children’s play a ‘shared artwork’ also links back to my discussion of Paulette as the director of her own drama, a drama upon which, unlike real life, she can exert a considerable degree of control.

At the end of the film, Michel admits his activities to his father but only as an exchange for the promise that his family will keep custody of Paulette. His father however, promptly hands the young girl over to the authorities. An outraged, tearful Michel destroys his cemetery, throwing crosses into the nearby stream. The children’s separation, as Miller argues, is a ‘belated victory for death: figuratively, the death of both children is the undoing of the figure articulated by their rituals and tokens of mourning.’<sup>325</sup> As a single act of betrayal of the child by the adult, the scene is quite unparalleled in my corpus of films and is centred around the young boy’s expression of incredulity as his father signs Paulette over to the authorities. Clément positions Michel to the right of the frame with four adults (his father, his older brother and two policemen) on the left. The latter two figures look down disapprovingly as Michel berates his father.

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<sup>324</sup> *ibid.* p.216

<sup>325</sup> *ibid.* p.216



Figure 73: Paulette is taken into custody at the end of *Forbidden Games*.

The image tells of the definitive end of childhood play, the shot filled with figures of authority with Michel forced to the edges of the frame. The film's final sequence takes place at a crowded church-turned-Red Cross refuge where Paulette is given a tag to wear around her neck. Significantly (as the sequence takes place in a church) she is given the name Dollé, ensuring a continuing bond of some kind with Michel.

#### 5.4 *Ivan's Childhood*: Two 'worlds' of play.

Jeremy Mark Robinson has characterised the figures of children in the work of Tarkovsky as 'going about seriously, with no smiles' and as 'solemn beings, lonely creatures.'<sup>326</sup> For Robinson, the Tarkovskyian childhood is one devoid of laughter. Therefore, and in regard specifically to *Ivan's Childhood*, could it be argued that it is a childhood also devoid of play?

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<sup>326</sup> Robinson, *The Sacred Cinema of Andrei Tarkovsky*, p.296

In the case of *Ivan's Childhood*, application of Terr's theory of post-traumatic play would appear to be problematic given that most episodes of play in the film are examples of carefree, 'ordinary play' which rather than taking place during or after traumatic events, unfold in Ivan's 'alternate reality'. There is however one major exception, one example of (post-traumatic) play which takes place in the present day 'reality' of war.

As I have already noted, most of the examples of play in *Ivan's Childhood* take place amongst nature (the forest, the sea) and are sharply contrasted throughout with the present reality of war in which Ivan is inextricably meshed. Furthermore, all these examples of play are variants on one popular childhood game – hide and seek. Both through his *mise en scène* and camera movement, Tarkovsky emphasises the lightness, the ethereality of Ivan's play. Indeed, the camera itself often seems to be a participant in the young boy's games, often tracking past him, soaring above him. This is an important point because, as opposed to the comparative sobriety of Clément's approach, there is in *Ivan's Childhood* a profound sense of the closeness between form and content, director and character, certainly in terms of play.<sup>327</sup>

D.W. Winnicott has written of adolescence as 'a process of death and murder', that is to say that 'if in the fantasy of early growth, there is contained *death*, then at adolescence there is contained *murder*.'<sup>328</sup> Winnicott emphasises the aggressive quality of adolescence but notes that, in the case of those children who have suffered the loss of a parent, this aggression does not find an outlet:

'[With the loss of the parent, the child] becomes the establishment. Lost is all the imaginative activity and striving of immaturity. Rebellion no longer

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<sup>327</sup> This close identification between director and character is discussed more fully in the earlier chapter on the child as (Deleuzian) seer and hearer.

<sup>328</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p.195

makes sense, and the adolescent who wins too early is caught in his own trap, must turn dictator, and must stand up waiting to be killed [...]'<sup>329</sup>

Of course, in the case of Ivan, aggression has an outlet in the form of his unquenchable desire for revenge for the death of his mother. In his own mind, there can surely be no doubt that Ivan feels he has become 'the establishment' but in the film, Tarkovsky appears to emphasise how such a belief on his young protagonist's part is completely lost on the adults around him. Throughout the film, and one would assume largely because of his physical rather than mental attributes, Ivan's superiors affirm repeatedly that 'war is for grown men, it's not for boys'. This unwillingness to embrace Ivan, to keep a rein on his anger is a major fault on the part of the film's adult (male) characters:

'Between Ivan and the rest of the men, the links have been broken. He is alone in the midst of war. [The war] envelops him completely [...] In him, dreams have died, play does not have a name, imagination has been extinguished [...]'<sup>330</sup>

Whether Ivan's dreams have died is of course open to question but it is certainly true that he appears to be barred from play by present reality as rigorously as Edmund in *Germany Year Zero*. However, unlike Rossellini's Edmund, Ivan takes refuge in dreams and these dreams all contain strong elements of play. The dream sequences (and the aspects of play therein) are repeated because, echoing Hadfield's definition of childhood play, Ivan is desperately needful of them.

Hadfield, in remarking on play as the spontaneous expression of patterns of behaviour designed to maintain existence, has remarked that:

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<sup>329</sup> *ibid*, p.197

<sup>330</sup> 'Entre Ivan et le reste des homes, les liens sont rompus. Il est seul au milieu de la guerre. [La guerre] l'enveloppe tout entier [...] En lui les rêves sont morts, le jeu n'a plus de nom, l'imagination est éteinte [...]' Vallet, *L'image de l'enfant au cinema*, pp. 177-178

‘The individual will need to stalk prey, and to hide from dangerous foes; there are patterns laid down to enable him to do this. The first manifestation of this instinct is hide and seek.’<sup>331</sup>

I have suggested that all the games in *Ivan’s Childhood*, regardless of their spatio-temporal positioning, are variants on hide and seek and it would be useful in this respect to examine closely two sequences in the film, one from each of the film’s *mondes*. These scenes have of course been discussed previously – notably by Johnson and Petrie in their seminal work on Tarkovsky – but not specifically in relation to childhood play. The first of these occurs when Ivan is left alone in the bunker as the adults go in search of transportation across the river. Johnson and Petrie have called this sequence ‘that [which] works best in presenting a subjective perspective on an actually occurring event – as opposed to the obvious unreality of the dreams.’<sup>332</sup> It is the only sequence in which Ivan is shown to play in the film’s war-ravaged present. Significantly, he ‘plays’ at stalking Germans, an example of what Hadfield has termed ‘racial play’, that is to say ‘behaviour characteristic of animal activity.’<sup>333</sup> Although I previously suggested that Terr’s theory of post-traumatic play is problematically applied to *Ivan’s Childhood* given that the majority of play could be classified as ‘ordinary’, this sequence – being the only scene of play after the death of Ivan’s mother – is the major exception and is undoubtedly worth examining in detail. In terms of psychoanalytic theory of play, and as with Paulette in *Forbidden Games*, it is a sequence which shows the child engaged in ‘desperate creativity’ in an attempt to master death, to turn passivity into activity. The

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<sup>331</sup> Hadfield, *Childhood and Adolescence*, pp.171-172

<sup>332</sup> Johnson and Petrie, *The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky: A Visual Fugue*, p.71

<sup>333</sup> Hadfield, p.172

sequence's *mise en scène* is markedly expressionist.<sup>334</sup> Left alone, Ivan slowly and awkwardly raises a bell from the floor. In a frontal shot, the bell dominates the frame with Ivan in the background heaving at the rope. After he secures the bell, Ivan disappears into the shadows. Tarkovsky then cuts to a medium shot of his young protagonist crawling under a table, his knife drawn. The menacing sound of marching boots can be heard on the soundtrack. I have previously observed that this is the only sequence in the film during which Ivan is shown employing play in the present but it is also the first (and only) sequence in which Ivan's inner thoughts are rendered through voice-over. 'We'll keep cool, that's the main thing' he says, 'Slowly, carefully [...] and remember, we have to get him alive.' Ivan throws a glass bottle against the wall, extinguishing the light. As he crawls on the floor, the voice of his nemesis can be heard on the soundtrack. The camera then switches to a medium high angle shot, tracking right to left along the floor guided only by the light from a torch piercing the darkness. The camera follows the light as it rises from the floor and runs left-to-right along a wall upon which has been scrawled 'There are 8 of us – all under 19. In an hour from now they'll shoot us. Avenge us.' As it does so, sounds of German voices are meshed with the cries of their victims on the soundtrack. The shot arrives at Ivan who, wide-eyed and sweating with fear, looks directly into the camera. In an frenzied burst of movement, the camera tracks back to reveal another young boy cowering on the floor. The shot continues, swishing back to focus on Ivan's knife glistening in the light then tracking back to discover a young girl, half-obscured by the darkness, face marked with fear only to return again to Ivan whose knife this time is raised, his figure reflected in a mirror behind him.

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<sup>334</sup> One shot in particular – occurring at 53' 22" – has Ivan surrounded by conventional objects (table, steps) which have taken on twisted, contorted forms. It is surely not an overstatement to say that, as a shot, it would not be out of place in Weine's *Der Kabinett des Dr. Caligari* (1919).



Quite unlike any other scene set in the film's wartime present, it is clear that this sequence's subjectivity is reflected primarily through camera movement, a movement characterised by disorientatingly brisk, jittery horizontal pans through a darkness punctured only by the light of a torch. However, despite this obscuring of spatial co-ordinates, the camera always returns to Ivan on the far right of the frame. At the end of the sequence, Tarkovsky cuts back to the bell which Ivan proceeds to ring continuously. Signalling victory, he exclaims 'Hurrah!' and then orders 'Hands up! Come out!' to an imagined enemy officer, represented in reality by an overcoat hanging inertly on the wall. Ivan confronts his 'nemesis' in shot-reverse-shot, 'Hands up! Come out! You can't hide from me! Are you shaking? You'll answer for everything!' In this exchange, however, it is Ivan's voice that is shaking as play mechanisms start to fail him. As he threatens 'I'll, I'll...', he begins to break down. 'I'll put you on trial' he says, trying to hold back tears, 'Do you think I've forgotten?' His play breaks down completely as he drops to the ground and into the darkness, sobbing uncontrollably.



Figures 74 & 75: Ivan's play in *Ivan's Childhood*.

It is clear that this episode is a striking example of Terr's post-traumatic play. Tarkovsky's protagonist imagines himself in an active position, a position which has been denied him by the film's adult characters. In Winnicottian terms, he imagines himself to be part of the 'establishment' and, as such, no longer a child. He then finds himself called upon to avenge the young prisoners just as in reality, his mission is to avenge the death of his parents. However, Ivan's play fails to deal with anxiety precisely because it deals with this external event rather than the internal event of ordinary play. As Terr has suggested, 'play is far more successful in diminishing the anxiety of fancied ills, such as castration anxiety or separation anxiety, than it is in dealing with real events and their circumstances.'<sup>335</sup> Ivan's play here contrasts with that of Flor and his cousin in the opening scene of Klimov's *Come and See*. The children in the latter film too, play at a form of hide and seek. The difference is that whilst in that particular episode Flor has a playmate and is engaged in ordinary play, Ivan is alone, employing solitary post-traumatic play.

The final sequence of *Ivan's Childhood* features another example of play, of hide-and-seek, only on this occasion, it occurs safely within the *anti-monde* of dreams - on the Tagorean 'seashore of endless worlds'. However, as Johnson and Petrie have pointed out, considering Ivan is shown to have died in the previous scene, whose dream is it? Opposed to the post-traumatic play that ends in the child's defeat and his desperate failure to relieve anxiety is this final postscript in which Ivan is engaged in the lightest of ordinary play. In terms of *mise en scène*, this scene differs greatly from the earlier game. Whilst that scene was cloaked heavy with darkness, fear and the threat of violence - with Ivan's movement characterised by

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<sup>335</sup> Terr (1981) p.756

trepidation and blinded by anger - the final scene unfolds on a shadow-less expanse of sun-drenched seashore.



Figures 76 & 77: The final shots of *Ivan's Childhood* showing Ivan 'running on water'.

This opposition is delineated not only through the character of Ivan, but also through those of his fellow children. Just as children were imprisoned, awaiting execution in the former, in the latter they play in a carefree fashion, unencumbered. The camera too, is unshackled in its movement: just as it probed through the darkness, moving through nervous, repetitive pans in the episode of post-traumatic play, in the final sequence, it glides horizontally, following Ivan's movement, careering joyously alongside him as he runs on the shore in the film's final shot. Regarding this scene, Kovács and Szilágyi have noted that:

‘Ivan's dreams always have a direct link with the first theme [that of war], with the exception of the last scene where Ivan returns after his death to the world of his childhood dreams’<sup>336</sup>

Robert Bird, in *Andrei Tarkovsky: Elements of Cinema*, argues that ‘we do not know whether these [dream] sequences belong to Ivan's mind's eye or to that of the spectator. More likely they are formed precisely in the crossing of these perspectives,

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<sup>336</sup> ‘Les rêves d'Ivan ont toujours un lien direct avec le premier thème, à l'exception de la dernière scène où Ivan retourne après sa mort dans l'univers de ses rêves d'enfant’, Kovács and Szilágyi, *Les mondes d'Andrei Tarkovski*, p.52

as a purely imaginative space.<sup>337</sup> In discussing the use of space in Tarkovsky's films, Bird echoes a point, cited earlier, which I have developed with reference to camera movement in these two episodes of play, namely that 'the single most important force in Tarkovsky's construction of space is the motion of the camera.'<sup>338</sup> Throughout these two episodes of play the camera's movement in space along with the respective *mise en scène* of the sequences serve to create the clearest possible snapshot of the two *mondes*. In the final scene, with the camera tracking rapidly alongside him, Ivan is shown to joyfully chase a young girl (a figure from the previous dream), catching up and then running past her.

### 5.5 The Power of Repetition: Play in *Diamonds of the Night*

In his introduction to *Darkness Casts No Shadow* - Arnost Lustig's source novel for Nemec's *Diamonds of the Night* – Anthony Blond observes that 'the two boys [Manny and Danny] are as familiar with killing as other boys with football, cricket or rounders, for it is the activity dominant in their lives, detaching them from their natural sense of survival, casting no shadow because darkness cannot.'<sup>339</sup> Blond equates forms of play activity in Lustig's story to killing and this has clear echoes of Terr's theory of post-traumatic play<sup>340</sup> in terms of the child's inability to distance himself from the traumatic event.

In discussing the nature and function of play in Nemec's film, it is useful to return to Erik Erikson whose writings on play I discussed with reference to *Paisan*.

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<sup>337</sup> Bird, p.56

<sup>338</sup> *ibid.* p.57

<sup>339</sup> Anthony Blond, introduction to Arnost Lustig, *Darkness Casts No Shadow* (London: Quartet Books 1989), p.6

<sup>340</sup> See my discussion of *Germany Year Zero*.

In common with Rossellini's film, rather than the child characters engaging in play, *Diamonds of the Night* has adult characters 'on vacation from social and economic reality', primarily through drunkenness. There are of course major representational differences between the drunkenness of the American soldier Joe and that of the elderly home guard, considerable differences in the respective directors' attitude toward these 'playful' adults. Whereas in *Paisà*, Joe's drunkenness is viewed with a degree of comprehension and sympathy by Rossellini – and, crucially, is actually entertaining to young Pasquale – in *Diamonds of the Night*, adult drunkenness is viewed as malignant and degenerate, filtered as it is through the tired, traumatised consciousness of the young protagonists whom they have stalked and captured. If Joe can be said to be a wary and disillusioned soldier with an uncertain future, he is nonetheless relatively young and healthy, he is still, as Erikson has remarked, a 'commodity-producing and commodity-exchanging being'. Nemec's representation of the decaying pack of the elderly home guard – laced with the darkest of black humour – is markedly different.

I have discussed how in *Ivan's Childhood*, the young protagonist engages in hide-and-seek in forms which are both 'ordinary' and 'post-traumatic'. In *Diamonds of the Night*, it is the home guard soldiers who are shown to engage in a form of hide-and-seek with Manny and Danny. Stumbling through the forest without great urgency as if leisurely hunting rabbits or deer, there is little doubt that Nemec presents the old men's stalking as play rather than work. Their awkward, lumbering movement is contrasted with the furious fleeing of the young boys. Despite Manny and Danny's youth, Nemec shows how they have been sapped of energy.



Figure 78: The elderly men of the home guard hunt down the fugitive boys in *Diamonds of the Night*.

The director, following Lustig's novel, shows that there is a desperate inevitability about their capture:

‘They both [Manny and Danny] assessed the old men and could see that they were a feeble handful of veterans who wouldn't have enough wind to keep going much longer, just as the two of them wouldn't either. But the old men were still fresh, while the boys were tired.’<sup>341</sup>

The desperate situation in which the boys find themselves affects them in different ways. The injured Danny, seemingly the older of the two, is shown in several instances chuckling to himself, a reaction perhaps to what he sees as the futility of their efforts. Injured, exhausted and hungry, his laughter is carried over several flashback shots featuring Manny running both toward and away from camera. In these shots, Manny is either at the centre of the frame, tightly enclosed by two structures or at the margins of the frame. Although he is always in movement, it is a movement that is ultimately futile, a fact reflected by the laughter that accompanies the image. In Lustig's novel, the author describes the source of Danny's laughter:

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<sup>341</sup> Lustig, *Darkness Casts No Shadow*, p.146

‘He [Danny] wished that everything that was still alive in his body would shrivel up and die. He grinned like a madman.’<sup>342</sup>

In terms of the novel therefore, the laughter, more than stemming from recognition of the futility of their efforts, comes from unbearable physical pain.

A pivotal passage occurs earlier in the film, before the boys’ capture. Nemec presents three shots which, whilst separate in spatio-temporal terms, when taken together are significant in terms of their relation to play. Firstly, Nemec presents a static wide shot of the two boys trying to negotiate a rocky, hostile terrain. They move slowly and clumsily in an upward direction (bottom right to top left). The director then cuts to a flashback shot of barely ten seconds length in which the camera, positioned at the foot of a snow-covered hill tracks rapidly right to left whilst groups of children glide down the hill on sleighs (top right to bottom left of the frame), laughing and chuckling in the snow.<sup>343</sup> There is then a cut to a tight two-shot of the boys under a tree in the pouring rain. Danny has his back to camera in the foreground whilst Manny faces camera, reaching up to drink rainwater. The shot is held as Manny excitedly drinks, rubbing his face with the rain. This elliptical passage in the film, like many of the flashback sequences, leaves many questions unanswered. Nemec’s positioning of the three individual shots is significant. I have noted previously how earlier flashback scenes follow a right to left trajectory (usually from the inside of a tram carriage) and this appears to be the case in this snow scene too. It would appear that the intense strain felt by Manny in the film’s present - the literal uphill struggle in the first of the three shots – brings forth memories of earlier, more carefree times. However, the snow scene is shot in such a

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<sup>342</sup> *ibid.* p.133 This sentence comes after a particularly gruelling description of the boy’s injured leg.

<sup>343</sup> This snow scene is more fully discussed in my earlier chapter on landscape.

way as to leave a great deal of ambiguity, especially in terms of perspective. It could be from Manny's subjectivity as he watches children at play from the inside of a tram but it could also be a free indirect shot with Manny as one of the playing children.

In the first two shots, both camera movement and movement of characters within the frame are particularly revealing. In a similar way to Tarkovsky's juxtaposition of harsh war-time reality and the idyllic world of Ivan's dreams, Nemec juxtaposes the leaden trudging of (enforced) adulthood with the weightlessness of childhood play.

The third shot of this sequence sees the joyfulness of childhood past spill onto the present: shot A and B appear to melt into shot C as snow turns to rain. This third shot sees the young boys 'step out of their social reality' (as fugitives) and play in a landscape marked by the elements. Rubbing his face and head, Danny drinks and showers at the same time. As a sequence, it links back to the early bath sequence in *Ivan's Childhood* and indeed forward to *Come and See*. In all three scenes, child characters seek to cleanse themselves, to somehow erase the detritus of war.

After being captured by the home guard, Manny and Danny are taken to a cavern where the old men arrive as if returning from a successful hunt. Congregated around a table whilst the young boys sit in the corner, the men begin eating, drinking and dancing. Of this sequence, Zalman has observed that:

'[It is] as much a picture of the senile world that never learns as of a humanity that has betrayed its own dignity. The only genuine humanity stares at us out of the fearful anxiety gripping the two boys.'<sup>344</sup>

With no dialogue and purely diegetic sounds, Nemec constructs a highly subjective soundscape as he heightens the sounds of toothless gums chewing sausages, hands

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<sup>344</sup> Zalman, p.59



greedily tearing at a chicken, beer cheerily being slurped while cutting back to the boys tiredly looking on.



Figures 79 & 80: The Home Guard gorge on food and drink as the exhausted boys look on in *Diamonds of the Night*.

As the men's eating dominates the film's aural level, shots of the boys are interspersed with previously visited flashes from the past, shots which all link with the events of the film's present. Shots of the men eating are followed up by a shot from the inside of the concentration camp train in which Manny chews on a pineapple rind, then similarly, after the men rise to make a toast - the clinking of glasses heightened - a shot of the boys drinking from a stream follows. It appears that Manny's subconscious is desperately attempting to allay anxiety through repetition. Through repetition, he attempts to turn passivity into activity much like Paulette in *Forbidden Games*. As he experiences situations in which he is passive (as a prisoner, watching the old men eat), episodes in which he was active (eating the rind, drinking from the stream) flash back into his consciousness. As Marans, Berkman and Cohen have suggested:

'When the child is rendered passive in the face of events that are threatening to his body and mind – a cascade of psychological and physiological processes ensue. [...] a child may resort to turning a passive experience into

an active response [...] when the dangers of real violence provoke feelings of helplessness and fear.’<sup>345</sup>

It is perhaps useful, in examining these early scenes - in which forms of repetition undoubtedly play a prominent part - to discuss Deleuze’s observations on repetition in the films of Luis Buñuel. In *Cinema 1*, Deleuze argues that Buñuel made ‘repetition rather than entropy, the law of the world’:

‘He [Buñuel] *injects the power of repetition into the cinematographic image*. In this way he is already going beyond the world of impulses, to knock on the doors of time and free it from the slopes or cycles which still subjugated it to content.’<sup>346</sup>

This is an important factor to consider regarding *Diamonds of the Night*. Of the comparatively few writings on the film,<sup>347</sup> many references are made to Buñuel as well as Alain Resnais being a major influence on Nemec:

‘Nemec has chosen the subject of anxiety.[The director] is fascinated by the subconscious phenomenon in human behaviour. Buñuel had been the first to make use of it in films, but it was only Resnais who found in it a means of expressing the philosophical crisis of the West. Nemec has set out on the same road, not so much out of an interest in philosophy as in the human aspect, which interests him far more.’<sup>348</sup>

## **5.6 *Come and See*: Playing on the edges of childhood.**

Just as it provides intriguing material for my earlier discussions of landscape and loss, the opening sequence of Klimov’s *Come and See* is of particular interest in my

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<sup>345</sup> Steven Marans, Miriam Berkman, Donald Cohen, ‘Child Development and Adaptation to Catastrophic Circumstances’ in Roberta J. Apfel and Bennett Simon (eds), *Minefields in their Hearts: The Mental Health of Children in War and Communal Violence* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1996), p.108

<sup>346</sup> Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, p.137 (My italics)

<sup>347</sup> Peter Hames’ analysis of the film, in *The Czechoslovak New Wave*, pp.167 – 171, is particularly illuminating.

<sup>348</sup> Zalman, p.59

discussion of childhood play. The scene features ordinary play as opposed to the other key sequence of play in the film, one of post-traumatic play.

As previously outlined, the film's opening sequence takes place on a beach in Belarus in 1943. The opening shot is a close-up of the back of a man's head as he gruffly berates his (off-screen) nephews. The shot is held as the man slowly turns (anti-clockwise) to face camera. Dishevelled in appearance, missing front teeth, he wears a flat-cap and continues chastising the young boys. Klimov then cuts to a wider, profile shot following the uncle as he walks slowly left to right. As he comes to a halt, Klimov cuts to a shot of a young boy moving slowly toward camera, imitating the growl and pose of his uncle, 'Do this, do that. Wipe your ass with your fingers. Ordering me around like another Flemish idiot. That's what I used to be, now I'm a German idiot!' This initial exchange resonates with observations by Nicolas Stargardt on the relationship between children and their adult counterparts under Nazi occupation, children's playing at being German soldiers. The child is in a sense imitating and openly parodying his uncle but he also calls himself a 'German idiot' which by no means suggests identification with occupying soldiers.

The uncle rides away in his horse and cart and Klimov then follows the boy as he replicates his uncle's growl. He is shown to mirror his uncle's movements and he is similarly framed as he points and growls to camera. The sound of laughter begins to be heard off-screen. 'You're laughing? You won't laugh for long', the boy growls. Klimov then cuts to the first shot of the film's protagonist, Flor, crouched behind a bush, laughing uncontrollably at his cousin's mimicry. 'Enough, the good times are over!' the cousin continues, 'Go to work or I'll fuck your mother!' In his play, the child welds together familial and extra-familial authority into one figure of parody.

Having lived much of his life during the war years, the child will no doubt have experienced both figures in close proximity. However, the boy's reference to Nazi soldiers' raping of women in occupied lands suggests little actual experience of such atrocities on his part.

The boys emerge from this little cocoon of play in the following (static) shot which sees them both running away from camera. As if to ground the film in reality rather than the playful pastiche of the earlier scenes, the words 'Belorussia 1943' appear on screen. Klimov cuts to a close-up of a hole being dug in the sand and, as the camera slowly pulls away, the digger is revealed to be Flor. The camera then tracks slowly left to right to reveal Flor's cousin, also engaged in digging. 'Go on, dig! Without any guns, they won't let us join' he says, this time without his mocking growl. It may be perhaps stating the obvious, but this scene links with digging sequences in earlier films (*Germany Year Zero* and *Forbidden Games*). Klimov, like Rossellini and Clément, brings out the unsettling quality of images of digging children. Whilst the children in *Come and See* do not dig graves, in their digging for guns, they are, like Edmund, Paulette and Michel, seeking entry into the adult world. What makes this sequence more powerful is that, unlike the earlier films, it unfolds on one of the few sites – the beach – in which children ordinarily dig for pleasure, as part of childhood play.

Flor finally finds a rifle buried deep in the wet sand. Face down – almost as in an open grave - he is shown groaning and straining until finally he manages to pull out the weapon. He appears incredulous as he gets to his feet, smiling and glancing around as if having snatched a prize seemingly out of reach – the prize for Flor is entry into the adult world. What is particularly intriguing in this scene is Klimov's

sound design. Up to this point, the sounds have been all diegetic and naturalistic: the gentle sea breeze, the sound of lapping waves. As Flor tugs at the rifle strap, a low, monotone hum fades in, building to a crescendo until it dominates the soundscape completely. Ostensibly, the hum is that of an observation plane circling above the children but in terms of perspective, the sound of the aircraft is markedly non-naturalistic and soon floods out all other sounds. The film's titles unfold over another wide, static shot of the beach, only on this occasion the boys are moving towards the camera, smiling and joking – Flor, perhaps because of his efforts pulling the rifle from the sand - is visibly limping. The low, brooding hum continues accompanied by a contemporary recording of 'Deutschland uber alles'.

On a surface level, the pre-credits and credits sequence of *Come and See* may seem to follow the traditional Hollywood paradigm in terms of its presentation of a situation of normality waiting to be shaken by a disturbance – in these early stages of the film there appears to be little of the formal experimentation of *Ivan's Childhood* or *Diamonds of the Night*. Having said that, what is significant about the scene – especially in terms of my discussion of childhood play - is that whilst it does represent a degree of normality before the plunging of Flor into the full horrors of the Nazi occupation, it is the normality *of war*. Klimov does not show idyllic pre-war (or anti-war) episodes of play as in *Ivan's Childhood* or *Diamonds of the Night* and for this reason *Come and See* is closer to the films of Rossellini and Clément. The boys do indeed engage in ordinary play but Klimov's interest lies in how this play has been contaminated and distorted by war. The boys, in their search for guns – and like all the characters in my corpus of films - attempt to turn passivity into activity through play. Flor and his cousin mock adult figures yet at the same time, they both

yearn to join the adult world. It recalls Jaimey Fisher's observations on children's caricatures of masculine agency, on (male) children's threat to adult males.

Another key sequence of play in *Come and See* occurs later in the film, a scene of intense lyricism, of brief (and comparatively innocent) sexual awakening in which Flor and Glasha share a few moments of playful abandon before Flor's horrific discovery of the fate of his family. The scene takes place after Flor and Glasha experience a terrifying forest bombing leaving Flor with a tinnitus that - as I have outlined in my earlier chapter on the child as witness - will swell into the film's soundscape. Indeed, following on from these earlier discussions, I would suggest that here, Flor's play - which is post-traumatic as opposed to the ordinary play of the opening sequence - is rendered in the free indirect style. As with episodes in *Ivan's Childhood* and *Diamonds of the Night*, this episode of play takes place in a forest landscape during a rainfall. Again, what is striking about this sequence - even more than the opening scene - is the complexity of its sound design.

The scene begins with a low-angle shot of thin trees stretching to the sky, the sun piercing through the light downpour. The tree, positioned centrally in the frame, shakes gently. The camera lowers to reveal Flor in the foreground, bare-chested, buoyantly shaking the tree. In the background, Glasha is shaking another. Flor then moves to another tree, shaking and grinning contentedly.

The sequence's sound design here comprises three separate layers: the diegetic sound of rain; an ominous drone similar to that of the opening scene (and which indeed resurfaces throughout the film); and a slow, mournful requiem played on an organ. The latter two extra-diegetic tracks appear to act in marked counterpoint to the image and - taken with the two uncanny images of a stork prowling through the

undergrowth which frame this play sequence - serve to presage the horror that awaits both characters. Needless to say that the requiem is also be for the final moments of Flor's childhood.<sup>349</sup> Glasha, in much the same way as Manny in *Diamonds of the Night* then reaches up to the sky as the rain patters down. She is bathed in light from above and a rainbow is visible behind her.



Figures 81 & 82: Glasha and Flor enjoy a rare moment of happiness and play in *Come and See*.

She rubs her face with both hands and then runs them down the curves of her body - a movement with which the image moves from the religious to the sexual, her green dress now black and figure-hugging from the rain. Flor brushes his naked torso with leaves – he too is bathed in a seraphic light. He exchanges a few words with Glasha - none of which are audible on the film's soundscape – and then takes her in his arms. The couple stumble and then fall to the ground laughing. For the first time, muffled squeals of laughter are heard - it is the first point in which the sequence's sound source can be attributed to Flor's recurring tinnitus.

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<sup>349</sup> It also links back to a scene in Rossellini's *Germany Year Zero* in which a guilt-ridden Edmund takes to the streets of Berlin for the final time after the poisoning of his father. In that sequence, just as in this one, the mournful sound of the organ signals the definitive end of childhood. The major difference is that whilst in Rossellini's film, the organ has a diegetic source, in *Come and See* it is extra-diegetic.

In the sequence's extraordinary final passage, Glasha stands on Flor's suitcase and begins dancing for the young boy. As with the opening beach sequence, Flor can be heard laughing. Klimov cuts to Glasha's underwear hanging on a washing line. The camera tracks along the line, left to right, to catch Flor in medium shot sneaking an embarrassed peek at the washing and then turning his gaze back to Glasha. Klimov holds the shot of Flor, the camera lowering slightly to capture his lustful yet innocent gaze, his awkward, entranced smile. The shot has a muggy, steamy quality which is due ostensibly to the weather and the forest setting but which also signals Flor's burgeoning adolescent sexuality seeping into the frame. The image of Flor in this shot – bare-chested, dripping wet, still relatively wholesome despite the trauma of the bombing – recalls images of Ivan in the dream sequences in Tarkovsky's film (especially his playing of hide and seek on the beach in the final scenes).

This dancing segment introduces another layer to the soundscape: the music to which Glasha dances. Functioning in counterpoint to the low, monotone drone, the music is light and jaunty and features a high-pitched, child-like vocal accompanied by rag-time piano. But it has no diegetic source – Glasha is dancing to music which she cannot actually be hearing. The layers now are four: two diegetic layers (rain, Flor's breathing and intermittent laughing) and two extra-diegetic (the low drone, the ragtime music). The fact that the music has no diegetic source and that Flor's breathing and laughter is firmly at the bottom of the sound mix suggests that the scene is Flor's free indirect vision, that the music could even be an aural flashback of the kind Nemec uses in *Diamonds of the Night*. Throughout this entire play sequence, whilst layers of sound are in continual flux, the overall dominance of the



drone is clear – it represents the heavy, encroaching shadow of war, a shadow from which Flor – again, like Manny in Nemec’s film - is attempting to escape.

The forest bombing prior to this episode of play has clearly marked Flor physically and psychically. The scene is an episode of post-traumatic play in that it takes place after a traumatic event and details the effects of the event on the child but Flor will not have the opportunity to engage in the form of post-traumatic play as outlined in *Forbidden Games*, he will not have the chance to gain mastery over his experiences.

Both these major sequences of childhood play in *Come and See* are, despite their outwardly blissful nature, marked by a mournful, elegiac quality. Taken together, both could function as microcosms for childhood innocence marked and then destroyed by war. The forest sequence will not be the last time Flor shares a laugh in the film (he laughs with the partisans as they joke with one another in a later sequence) but it is certainly the last time he plays *as a child*<sup>350</sup>.

## 5.7 Conclusion

Having examined the child as witness, the child in relation to landscape and the child’s experience of loss, this chapter has focused on childhood play in my corpus of films. As for childhood loss, I have utilised psychoanalytic theory (Winnicott, Hadfield, Erikson and Lenore Terr) to examine the function of play for the child characters in my corpus. I have compared the play of the child to that of the adult,

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<sup>350</sup> Although in the forest scene, Flor can be perhaps more accurately referred to as an adolescent rather than child, given his sexual stirrings.

arguing that, as Hadfield observes, play is deeply needful to the child. Through play, the child attempts to master his surroundings, to turn passivity into activity.

In Rossellini's *Germany Year Zero*, Edmund's sustained barring from play shows how he is a stranger to the world of childhood. In Clément's *Forbidden Games*, play is the very topic of the film and represents the process through which Paulette works through the trauma of the loss of her parents. For Ivan in Tarkovsky's film, play exists only in his dreams with one exception – a sequence which I examine in detail and which is post-traumatic rather than the ordinary, carefree play of his dreams. For Nemec in *Diamonds of the Night*, play manifests itself in extra-diegetic form, in the repetition of images which flash before the wayward mind of his exhausted protagonist. In the celebrations of the senile old guard who capture them, Nemec creates a grotesque vision of adult play, of 'a humanity that has betrayed its own dignity.' Play is not associated with children but with senile, gum-less 'baby-like' old men.

Klimov's *Come and See* begins with an episode of play as Flor and his cousin dig for weapons which will allow them entry into the adult world. A post-traumatic episode of play occurs later in the film, after the forest bombing, representing the final point at which Flor is shown in carefree play.

## 6. Conclusion

Throughout the course of my study, I have sought to examine the representation of childhood in the European Fiction Film between 1946 and 1985. As outlined in my introduction, the six films in my corpus represent only a small number of the films on the subject but through these key works I have sought to highlight why film, more than any other artform, is best suited to a faithful and affecting exploration of the subject. In his article 'The Burning Babe', Tyrus Miller lists four major reasons as to why filmmakers have consistently turned to the figure of the child to examine the realities of war. Firstly, 'setting child characters against intense and difficult historical circumstances, these films highlight the limits of children's abilities to interpret, comprehend and act in the world', secondly, 'child characters offer a poignant metaphor for adult subjectivity faced with the overwhelming contingencies of history', thirdly 'child characters often represent a utopian reserve of openness and hope within an otherwise closed horizon of adult experience' and lastly, 'child characters offer filmmakers (as well as other creative artists) key narrative devices by which to approach the intractable historical situation.'<sup>351</sup> From Miller's observations questions must naturally arise regarding my own study, in particular, its position in relation to the major works on the topic, the reasoning behind the choice of films and the thesis' structure.

The current work represents a bridge between the work of Pierre Sorlin on the figure of the child in films of the immediate post-war period and the work of

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<sup>351</sup> Miller, p.231

Karen Lury whose recent work has paid greater attention to films made many years after the war, films which often give primacy to the processes of memory.

## 6.1 The Persistence of Memory

J.G. Ballard<sup>352</sup> gave one of his final interviews before his death in April 2009 to BBC Radio 3's *Night Waves*. Interviewer Philip Dodd remarked that Ballard had 'somehow been formed by the past'. 'You're not a Whig historian' Dodd notes, 'the past is not something you can let go of.' Ballard, in his own inimitable way, agreed:

'The past sits astride me like a crashed aircraft straddling a railway line or a tank that has thrown one of its treads – [it's as if] the crew can rotate the turret but not much more.'<sup>353</sup>

In his 2008 autobiography *Miracles of Life*, Ballard writes vividly of his experiences in an internment camp in Shanghai during the Second World War, experiences which formed the basis of his 1984 novel *Empire of the Sun* - adapted for the screen by Steven Spielberg in 1987.

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<sup>352</sup> Ballard's main preoccupations and distinctive style – a focus on dystopia, bleak man-made landscapes and the psychological effects of technological, environmental or social developments – have given rise to the term 'Ballardian' and have their roots in his wartime experience.

<sup>353</sup> An interview conducted by Philip Dodd with J.G. Ballard for BBC Radio 3's *Night Waves*, January 2008.



Figure 83: Jim (Christian Bale) is immersed in the reality of war in *Empire of the Sun*.

That year also saw two other films deal with childhood experience of the Second World War. John Boorman's *Hope and Glory* and Louis Malle's *Au revoir, les enfants* both drew heavily on their director's wartime experiences. In discussing his film, Malle admitted:

‘[There are] certain distortions, almost as if my imagination during those forty-five years had taken over and fertilized my memory. Memory is not frozen, it’s very much alive, it moves, it changes.’<sup>354</sup>



Figure 84: Jean and Julien huddle together in *Au Revoir, Les Enfants*.

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<sup>354</sup> Louis Malle and Philip French (ed), *Malle on Malle* (London: Faber and Faber 1993), p.167

Of course, the further away one goes from the actual event, the more complex and nuanced visions of it become. Karen Lury, in *The Child in Film*, discusses the concept of prosopopoeia in films on childhood and war, 'that is, a conversation between the living (the adult survivor) and the dead (the child self, who may or may not be alive at the end of the film). As a practice, prosopopoeia is continually open to the possibility that what is being projected on to the 'dead' (here the child) may not be true.'<sup>355</sup>

The machinations of memory undoubtedly play an important part in my study, both in pro-filmic and extra-filmic terms, though of course only for the films made some time after the conflict. In terms of the extra-filmic, what is significant is that directors Nemec, Tarkovsky and Klimov draw not only on their own experiences of war (all three having actually been children during the war) but also from the writers upon whose work their films are based (Arnost Lustig, Mikhail Bogomolov and Ales Adamovich respectively). There are thus two layers of memory feeding into the one work, that of the filmmaker and that of the screenwriter. Luciano Cecconi notes that in Spielberg's *Empire of the Sun* there is also this double identification, but that it takes on marginally different - and even more intricate - form. 'Childhood is the sole focus of the film and director identification with the child protagonist is two-, even three-fold'<sup>356</sup> he notes. First there is the director's identification with the character as a child, then there is young Spielberg and young Jim's shared love of science fiction and thirdly, there is the identification with Ballard himself as an adult.

In pro-filmic terms, the two films that attempt to delve into the processes of memory are *Ivan's Childhood* and *Diamonds of the Night*. As Maureen Turim notes

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<sup>355</sup> Lury, p.111

<sup>356</sup> '[...] L'infanzia è l'oggetto unico del film e l'identificazione col protagonista è doppia, forse tripla', Cecconi, p.86

in *Flashbacks in Film*, 'World War Two [...] has been the initiating experience for many modernist flashbacks. This group of films does not just follow the patterns of films made by Hollywood that connect the War to the pre-war period [...] instead many of these films seek an analogue in modernist editing for the way in which memories of the past [...] disturb continuity of action in the present.'<sup>357</sup> While this rendering of psychic damage through modernist editing techniques is most evident in *Diamonds of the Night*, what of Tarkovsky's film? Is *Ivan's Childhood*, with its visions of a bucolic childhood closer to the Hollywood pattern outlined by Turim? Such a conclusion, as I have amply demonstrated throughout my work, is superficial and fails to take into account the complexity of Tarkovsky's spatio-temporal shifts and their function in delving into their child protagonist's troubled psyche.

The question of memory is of course of little relevance to Rossellini's *Paisan* and *Germany Year Zero* and Clément's *Forbidden Games*. Not only do all three films arrive shortly after the end of the war, they are from directors who experienced war from an adult perspective. In his essay 'Children as war victims in post-war European cinema', Sorlin notes that filmmakers of the immediate post-war period, having actually lived through the conflict as adults, were often harsh on their child protagonists, many of whom 'become outlaws.'<sup>358</sup> If the child can indeed be called an 'outlaw' in these films – and Sorlin is here thinking of characters such as Edmund in *Germany Year Zero* – it is surely the adult who is chiefly to blame. In *Paisan*, *Germany Year Zero* and *Forbidden Games*, Rossellini and Clément both seek to highlight the culpability of the adult, the idea that the adult in no way tries to view events from a child's perspective, denying them the understanding and affection they

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<sup>357</sup> Maureen Turim, *Flashbacks in Film* (New York: Routledge 1989), pp. 231 - 232

<sup>358</sup> Sorlin, p.121

so desperately crave. As I have outlined, in these immediately post-war works, it is the world around the child which marks and influences his/her actions, the ‘movement of the world’.

## 6.2 Movement of the World

The four-part structure of my work moves from the ‘movement of the world to the ‘movement of the mind’, from the child as figure (witness and landscape) to the child as prism. (loss and play). In terms of theoretical framework, I moved from outside-in to inside-out - as I focused on the child’s attempt at grappling with trauma, with loss, and his attempt at gaining control, mastering events through creativity.

In my chapter on the child as witness, I used the Deleuzian concept of the seer as a starting point. Deleuze’s discussion of the figure of the seer in post-war time-image cinema is not confined to the child - indeed, he mentions several adult characters as seers – but he certainly sees the child, given his apparent motor-helplessness, as a proto-typical seer. It must be said though, that he never fully develops this point. Later scholars such as Jaimey Fisher have critiqued Deleuze’s labeling of child characters as seers – a view which I undoubtedly share.

My corpus of films are book-ended by works which feature seers (Rossellini’s *Paisan* and *Germany Year Zero* and Klimov’s *Come and See*). Following Fisher, I have argued that the labeling of child characters in Rossellini’s films as seers is too simplistic as Pasquale and Edmund clearly oscillate between passivity and activity. I build on Fisher’s observations however by arguing that it is Flor in *Come and See* that is in many ways the exemplary seer. Rossellini’s films and that of Klimov share



similarities - their respective bal(l)ade structures, their relative linearity - but Flor in *Come and See* certainly is closer to the pure seer as opposed to Pasquale and Edmund. I suggest that the main reason for this is the intensity, the fullness of Klimov's film which is closer stylistically to Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*. Whereas Pasquale and Edmund try to react against the world around them (admittedly to little effect), in *Come and See*, the world completely overwhelms its protagonist, especially at its harrowing end. I continued to focus on the movement of the world in my second chapter, which examined the child's relationship with landscape. Drawing on the work of Sandro Bernardi, Martin Lefebvre and Gilles Deleuze, I suggest that landscape, like the figure of the child itself, is poised between passivity and activity.

The neorealist film presents flattened, deformed cityscapes and in these disconnected spaces, the child emerges to be faced with a landscape which challenges, entices. That being said, the young Pasquale and Edmund often seem better suited than their adult counterparts to a negotiation of the devastated terrain before them.

In Clément's *Forbidden Games*, the child withdraws from the harsh adult landscape to create her own - a cocoon from the reality of war - only for it to be removed by adults. With Tarkovsky and Nemec, expressionist landscapes reflect the tormented psychological states of their young protagonists. *Ivan's Childhood* is divided into two clear realms: the reality of war and the alternative reality of the boy's dreams and these realms differ offer two diametrically opposed 'childhoods'. In *Diamonds of the Night*, there is a return to the urban landscapes of neorealism but unlike the devastated streets of Naples or Berlin, Prague is eerily untouched and shown to haunt the young fugitives as they move through forests and fields.

Representation of landscape is far more fragmented and elliptical than those of Tarkovsky.

Like *Germany Year Zero* and *Paisan*, the child in *Come and See* has a complex relationship with landscape. There is almost a sense that – through Klimov's roaming steadicam photography - landscape is by-passed. That is to say it is not contemplated or given time to emerge as in the earlier films. That being said, on at least one occasion - the bog sequence - it rises up and even threatens to consume the young protagonist. In general however, the focus in *Come and See* is less on the landscape and more about the absorption of this landscape into Flor's features. It is as if the child's traumatised body has become the equivalent of the war-scarred landscapes of neorealism as the viewer sees him transform from a naïve boy into an experience-hardened partisan.

### **6.3 Movement of the Mind**

From outside in, the second half of my thesis focuses on inside out, that is to say the child's psychological states. After suffering a harrowing loss, the child engages in play which, rather than being ordinary and care-free, is often post-traumatic and loaded with anxiety.

For my chapter on loss, I drew on psychoanalytic theory to examine how the respective filmmakers represent their young protagonists' tragic losses. In this context, I examined the role of water. In all the films, and in one form or another, water often represents that which the child has lost. Water as a symbol is of course deeply ambivalent but from *Paisan* to *Come and See*, it is on the whole a positive

presence and, crucially, links closely to the maternal. Critics and observers such as Robinson note that water has special significance in the work of Tarkovsky. Truppin, for example, argues that how in Tarkovsky's films, water facilitates the 'shifting of hierarchy' between dream and reality, past and present. I draw clear links in my study between *Ivan's Childhood* and the poetry of Rabindranth Tagore, in particular, a collection of child poems called *The Crescent Moon*.

For the fugitive boy in Nemec's *Diamonds of the Night*, images of what he has lost - shelter, a maternal figure, lost love - haunt him throughout. Nemec's loss images are certainly more oblique as opposed to those of Tarkovsky but are undoubtedly infused with a Kafkian sense of anxiety. In Klimov's *Come and See* Flor's family marks a critical moment in his journey from youthful naiveté to war-battered partisan. Up to this shocking discovery, the boy had retained some of the vestiges of childhood. There are undoubtedly links between Nemec's farmhouse sequence (which I discuss in detail) and Flor's tragic homecoming in which a domestic setting becomes the scene of devastating loss. After having his family massacred, Flor is swept up by the horrors of Nazi occupation, powerless to react. In the aftermath of the climactic scenes of genocide (which he has survived only by chance) Klimov presents a scene which takes the viewer out of the brutal causality of war, utilising reverse motion to return to an image of Hitler as a baby.

For my final chapter, I drew on the psychoanalytic theory of Winnicott, Hadfield, Erikson and Lenore Terr to examine the function of play for the child characters. I suggest that play is crucial for the child in his/her attempts to master their surroundings, to turn passivity into activity. The Naples episode of Rossellini's *Paisan* sees the adult engaged in drunken play while young Pasquale is shown to

have little time for play while in *Germany Year Zero*, Edmund's sustained barring from play shows his estrangement from the world of childhood. In Clément's *Forbidden Games*, play is central to the film and young Paulette is shown to work through the trauma of the loss of her parents through her play with Michel. In *Ivan's Childhood*, it could be argued that play exists only in the protagonist's dreams, with one major exception. I examine this scene in detail and highlight that it represents an episode of post-traumatic rather than the ordinary play. In *Diamonds of the Night*, play manifests itself in extra-diegetic form, in the repetition of images flashing before the exhausted fugitive youth. Like *Paisan*, *Diamonds of the Night* features adults at play although with far more grotesque and sinister connotations. Nemec's is a grotesque vision of degeneracy with the senile old guard scoffing and swilling before their exhausted captives. *Come and See* opens with an episode of play as Flor and his cousin are shown digging for weapons on a deserted beach. Although an episode of play, it does nonetheless have a serious purpose for the boys – that of being able to join the adult world of resistance to Nazi occupiers. Later in the film, Klimov presents a post-traumatic episode of play which shows Flor and Glasha engaged in carefree play for what will be the last time.

## Filmography

*A Generation* (Andrzej Wajda 1954)

*An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge* (Robert Enrico 1962)

*Apocalypse Now* (Francis Ford Coppola 1979)

*Ashes and Diamonds* (Andrzej Wajda 1957)

*Au Revoir, Les Enfants* (Louis Malle 1987)

*Chickamauga* (Robert Enrico 1962)

*Come and See* (Elem Klimov 1985)

*Diamonds of the Night* (Jan Nemec 1964)

*Empire of the Sun* (Steven Spielberg 1987)

*Forbidden Games* (René Clément 1952)

*Germany Year Zero* (Roberto Rossellini 1947)

*Hope and Glory* (John Boorman 1987)

*Hue & Cry* (Charles Crichton 1947)

*Kanal* (Andrzej Wajda 1956)

*M* (Fritz Lang 1931)

*Mandy* (Alexander Mackendrick 1952)

*Mirror* (Andrei Tarkovsky 1974)

*Paisà* (Roberto Rossellini 1946)

*The Passion of Joan of Arc* (Carl Theodor Dreyer 1928)

*Port of Shadows* (Marcel Carné 1938)

*Rome, Open City* (Roberto Rossellini 1945)

*Wild Strawberries* (Ingmar Bergman 1957)

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